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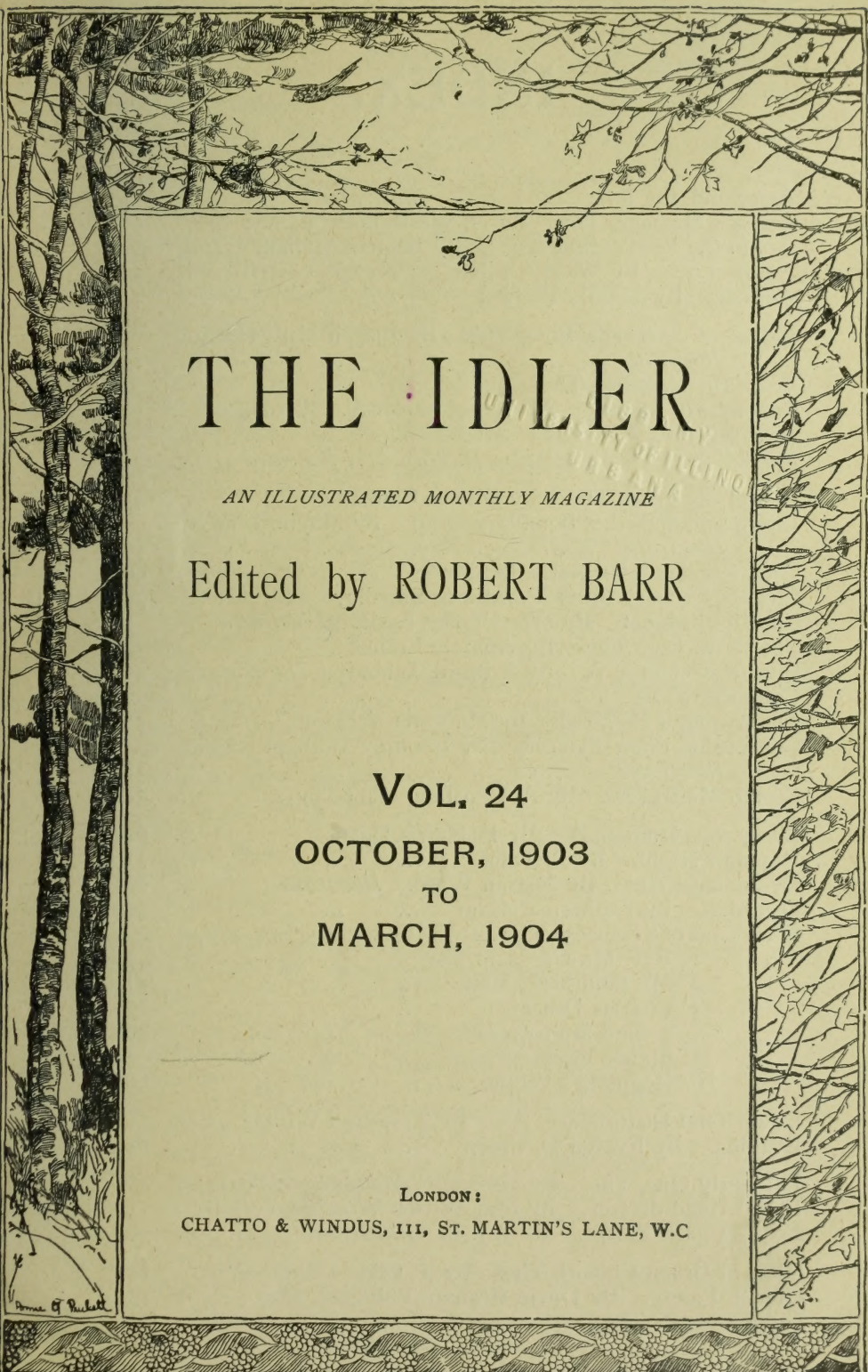




"SHE WENT STRAIGHT TO HER FATHER WITH THE WHOLE STORY."

*See page 38.*





# THE IDLER

*AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY MAGAZINE*

Edited by ROBERT BARR

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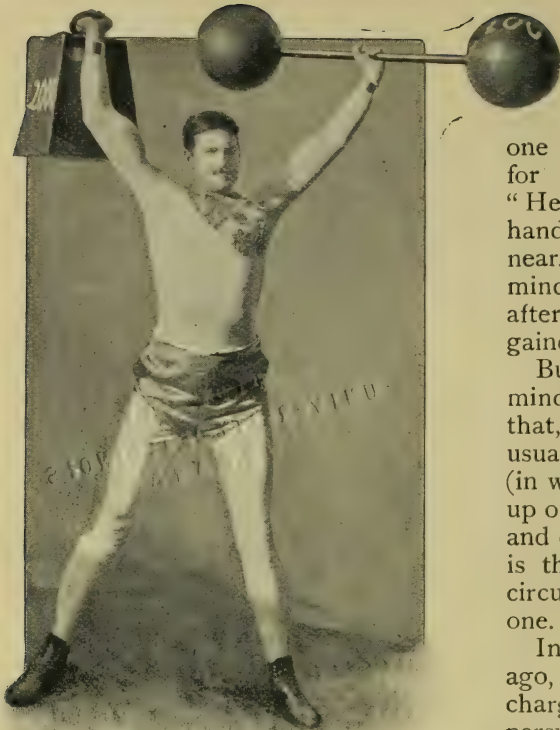


EVERYONE who sees a great circus wonders at the organisation, the labour, and the individual concentration required of the manager of such a show. The mass of detail, from housing and transporting the animals and company to advertising and arranging the

season's schedule, is appreciated by anyone who studies the matter. But when an amateur circus is planned for the amusement of the visitors at some summer resort, there are so many humorous elements connected with it that the troubles of the amateur manager are scarcely thought of. The spectators laugh at everything, from the ferocious animals with *papier-mâché* heads and canvas hides to the side-show man who describes their friends, rigged up for the occasion, as freaks.

The chief pleasure of an amateur circus is that no one knows at any given moment just what is going to happen next. But too much in the way of humorous possibilities begins to pall on the manager of such an enterprise.

BORN IN CAPTIVITY.



A HERCULEAN FEAT.

The head keeper of a troop of real elephants, for instance, knows his charges quite well. He can tell you the characteristics of each one of the ponderous tribe. "Look out for the big fellow," he will remark. "He's pretty mean, and he's liable to hand you a good one if you go too near." The workings of the animal's mind can be quite easily interpreted after a knowledge of him has been gained by years of experience.

But fancy an elephant with two minds—and much more active ones at that, than a genuine elephant's cranium usually contains! To keep a menagerie (in which all the larger beasts are made up of two separate human beings) happy and contented on a warm summer's day is the task the manager of an amateur circus has to face, and it is not an easy one.

In a show of this kind, a little while ago, the particular showman who had charge of the seal had tried the gentlest persuasion to make the animal bark for the visitors. The seal replied that he was thirsty, and that it was too hot to



THE EQUESTRIENNE TROUPE.



bark, and that it was time to close the side-show, anyhow, and begin the performance in the main tent, and that next time he would be the front part of a camel or a giraffe, because you could get some air in the neck of the beast.

The seal, when he delivered this ultimatum, had not thoroughly considered the unfortunate fact that he had been laced up from the outside, and was somewhat at the mercy of the friend who was exhibiting him. A gentle kick

Doctor Garner or some other interpreter of animal language would not have been necessary to translate the seal's protests. An ordinary hack-driver would have done just as well.

Eventually, a treaty was agreed on, and the seal barked, on his keeper's promise to release him in fifteen minutes.

Meanwhile, the elephant's wicked brain—or rather brains—had been devising trouble. The elephant unanimously declared that it—or they—had



A CONSTELLATION OF ATTRACTIONS.

brought only sullen silence. A couple of pretty stiff prods, where the ribs of lathing were absent, caused signs of commotion. The seal's interior workings were beginning to feel outraged. Meanwhile, the crowd gathered to see the fun. The keeper incautiously stepped too near, and was bowled over by the animal's flipper; but he scrambled out of the way, awkwardly pursued by the beast. It is to be feared that the services of

a large thirst. In their natural habitat, elephants are often captured or killed while indulging their thirst, by natives lying in wait at the drinking-pool. And one would think that an elephant with two thirsts would probably be twice as easy to deal with. Such, however, was not the case with the amateur elephant in question. His hind quarters loudly demanded a whisky-and-soda, while his fore quarters threatened to strike if

## THE IDLER

lemonade were not procured at once. It was almost time for the grand parade into the big tent, and something had to be done to mollify the big beast who was to head the procession. So he was led to the refreshment pavilion, after agreeing to return in five minutes. When partially refreshed, and feeling better, he held communion with himself.

"I say, Billy," came from his head, "it's awfully hot for this sort of thing. Couldn't we hire a couple of yokels to take our places for the parade?"

everything went well at first. Even the giraffe and the camel, who were fitted out with necks so long that they were hard to manage, behaved decorously. But the elephant seemed destined to go wrong. His new stock of brains was no better than the last. The spectators were much amused to see his hind feet continually tripping and stepping on the heels of his front feet. The two ex-occupants were the only ones—with the exception of the present incumbents—who regretted the matter.



"THE TROUPE" MAKING UP.

The hind part of the beast at once let himself out, leaving a sorry-looking cripple to await results. Finally, matters were arranged, and the component parts of the erstwhile elephant went to rejoin their friends on the benches surrounding the arena, after leading their substitutes to the tent.

As the procession of manufactured animals, described in glowing terms on the programme, filed out of the side-tent,

"We ought to have made them practice walking, Billy," remarked the ex-fore legs. "I could kick myself for this."

As if by mental telepathy, this suggestion was communicated to the elephant's fore feet. His patience exhausted, he stopped and landed a vigorous kick in his stomach, and a second one on his hind shins. This sent the spectators into shrieks of





PREPARING FOR THE PRELIMINARY PARADE.

laughter. But there was little mirth in the ponderous brute.

"A house divided against itself shall fall" is a well-known saying, but it is even more true that an elephant divided against itself is lucky if it escapes with a mere fall. The hind quarters became

disembodied, and ran for the exit; while a couple of clowns led the wreck of the pride of the menagerie out of the ring.

A particularly pleasing feature of an amateur circus held last summer was the performance of the equestriennes. Eight



SQUEEZED TO DEATH.

Copyright, 1902, by Burr McIntosh.

young ladies, who were skilled horsewomen, arranged to perform a series of manœuvres, and this was really the prettiest part of the show. A riding-master was engaged to train them and to perfect the evolutions. The audience, ranged tier on tier around the arena, was, of course, an appreciative one, consisting largely of parents and friends of the performers. Still, the equestrienne exhibition could hardly

tained everyone, and was roundly encored.

The chariot-race, too, was more than usually interesting. In a professional circus, such a race is mathematically arranged beforehand. The charioteer who has the inside of the course at the first turn will swing out at the second, enabling his rival to take the pole. From then on, they will alternate until the last turn, when the team on the inside



THE SACRED ELEPHANT.

have been more satisfactory, from an artistic point of view, if performed by professionals. Of course, nothing daring or spectacular was attempted. The effect of an effort of this kind on the audience would have been anything but pleasant, and sixteen angry parents would have been over the ropes and into the ring in a minute to stop the performance. A very good example of "high-school" riding, however, enter-

will win, unless the outside team should show an exceptional burst of speed—a thing which rarely occurs, because two such performances a day tire out the horses quite thoroughly. If any pride in victory or desire for the plaudits of the multitude stirs the professional drivers, they are allowed to take turns at winning. In other words, the race is "fixed."

But the amateur charioteer, on the



other hand, has only this one opportunity to beat his rival. The race excites him.—The horses are keyed up to it, and can have a long rest after the race. If there is a sharp collision, no one will be fined for knocking the enamel paint off the chariots, as in a real circus. As for the personal risk, the fun of the thing outbalances that. Moreover, the rival Romans have probably placed a small bet on the result, and their friends have followed suit. So the race is full of jockeying at the turns and excitement for every one concerned.

During the whole performance, the clowns go to and fro, making local hits and jokes on the fads and foibles of the spectators. Some of them are skilled acrobats, and give a good exhibition of rough-and-tumble burlesque, such as is seen on the music hall stage in town. And the fact that each one is known to the spectators adds amusement to the show and tends to blind the eyes to defects and crudities in it.

After the regular entertainment in the big tent, the side-show is opened. Here all the freaks hold forth. The "strong man," with huge muscles stuffed out with straw, lifts great weights—labelled "1,000



A DECISION "IN CHANCERY."

lbs." and made of rubber, stuffed with hay or feathers—and juggles them about in a manner to defy the professionals; and when he hurls one of these weights out into the audience, few can repress an involuntary scream. The "living skeleton" is a thin man, clad in a jersey, on which his anatomy is painted in a ghastly white; while his friend, the "fat man," is made more of hay than of flesh and blood. Others take different parts, walking on swords, eating fire and doing different fake tricks suggested by members of a professional troupe.

When the show is for charity, as is often the case, some amateur prestidigitator usually takes charge of the shell-game and three-card trick booth, familiar to anyone who has seen a country circus. If he is deft—and not to be so is likely to prove expensive—he can sometimes clear a large sum in an afternoon.



"BEAUTY AND THE BEAST."

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## THE IDLER

Then the show breaks up, and tea is served on the lawn or at neighbouring houses, while the performers resume their every-day garb and rejoin their friends. At one such circus an accident happened, which, in a real, professional show, might have had disastrous consequences. All the animals hastened to the dressing-room except the bear. He was not especially uncomfortable in his

hairy forearm about her waist, she did not scream. On the contrary, she proved to be fully armed for this kind of bear, and dealt a resounding slap upon his *papier-mâché* head. A treaty of peace was, however, arranged, and the two posed for a photograph, spending some time in agreeable chatter. When they separated, it was growing dark, and Bruin, fearing the shot guns of near-by



THE ROYAL BENGAL (STUFFED) LION.

shaggy coat, and decided to escape, and retain it a while longer and try his hand at a few practical jokes. Accordingly, he stole quietly away through the shrubbery and, waiting his chance, got across the road on to a neighbouring lawn. Picking out one of his glass eyes, he applied one of his natural ones to the socket and espied a girl sitting in a hammock reading a book. He must have made some noise as he stole softly up from behind, because, as he slipped his

farmers, took his head off and ambled over to the dressing-tent.

When the real "only original" performance took place, its success was so great that people predicted that it would have many imitators at once. This would doubtless have occurred were it not for the immense amount of trouble involved in arranging such a show. A clever ring-master and good amateur performers must be enlisted, and daily conferences and rehearsals must be



undertaken. Costumes must be made or ordered, and a score or more of other troublesome details attended to. Still, of all the amateur shows, a circus is the most enjoyable. Theatricals occur so often that even audiences composed of friends of the performers are disposed to become critical. Moreover, in summer-time, people prefer outdoor entertainments. An amateur circus in a large, airy tent conforms to this requirement, and it has the important advantage of novelty over all the numberless other forms of summer amusement.

Lawn parties are no longer as popular as they were. People are coming to think that it is a poor kind of amusement to dress in their best, and sip tea,

and chatter on a summer afternoon. To draw summer visitors together at an entertainment, it must have some element of attractive novelty.

Gymkhana-races have an element of excitement and risk in them, and, in their humorous, burlesque features, are not unlike the amateur circus. But they lack the variety, the grotesqueness and the snap which the sawdust ring and the side-show tent, whether filled with professionals or amateurs, real wild beasts or fake make-shift animals, always have.

No other summer show, in all its possibilities for diversified amusement, can ever quite take the place of the amateur circus.

---

## THE ROSE AND THE LILY

IN the long, long ago, so they tell me,  
In a garden (where, nobody knows),  
There grew a sweet, modest, white lily  
And a homely, old-fashioned white rose.

And they both loved the amorous West Wind,  
Just why, I'm sure nobody knows ;  
And the Wind was in love with the lily  
That grew by the homely white rose.

In the night came the amorous West Wind,  
Confused by the dark, I suppose ;  
And the kiss that was meant for the lily  
Was pressed on the lips of the rose.

And ever since then, so they tell me,  
Wherever a sweet garden grows,  
There's a paleness of grief o'er the lily,  
And a blush on the face of the rose.



"SOME EXPRESSIONS EVEN LESS MELLIFLUOUS WERE WINNING MANIFEST FAVOUR FROM THE CIRCLE OF AUDITORS."





PERHAPS it is nothing much to boast about, but there are two or three fellows who take some satisfaction in the matter of Allan Kent's insurance. To their notion, the encounter with the Equinoctial Life partook of the nature of an engagement between a battleship and a fleet of despatch-boats. And the result of the encounter is the story. Kent did not hear of it until months later, when he was up in the mountains, safely convalescent.

Kent was a man so companionable, so genuine, so uniformly gentle of manner and kindly of nature, that even in *The Register* office, where factions rose and fell as on other newspapers, he was exempt from all jealousies, whatever good fortune came to him. Kent's fame and friendships had multiplied rapidly since he came from college, less than ten years before, with the newspaper instinct and an artist's hand. Some noteworthy political cartoons, which helped to cheer a national campaign, crowned his success as an illustrator, and earned him a long vacation. He was known at home as a correspondent, with his pencil at hand to illustrate the graphic stories he wrote, who let no news escape him.

And now the boys feared that they had seen the last of Kent. Rogers stopped at the house every morning and every evening to learn the latest news—

Rogers, who had given up his first chance in the office, and had drawn pictures at the next desk to his ever since. Ames, his old college chum, who had brought him to town from the north, and worked with him as a running-mate—reporter and artist—was living at the house, helping the doctors, the nurses, and the family to hold fast to the little hope that remained.

For Kent, it seemed, was sick unto death. His system, saturated with malaria and fever-germs of varieties unknown to medical science, had rebelled. The accumulated hardships and irregularities of life during three years of campaigning in the tropics had broken him down at last.

Good news seldom came from the sick-room during that protracted fight with death. Rogers spent ten minutes at the bedside one morning, feeling that the last hope was gone.

When the office messenger brought Rogers his mail later in the day, there was one letter addressed to Kent, with the familiar business-card of the Equinoctial Life Assurance Company on the envelope.

"That's a ghoulis sort of a coincidence," he said to Grayson, who was in the artists' room asking for news about Kent. "I'm afraid there won't be much more business to do on this policy," he continued, with a grim effort at lightness, as evidence of the depth of his feelings.

"You know I've been taking care of Allan's finances while he was away—such few things as needed attention—and paying his insurance premiums until he got back, four months ago. I suppose this is a notice for the last premium they'll ever get on this risk."

He tore open the envelope and took out the enclosure. It was a notice, in due form, to Allan Kent, that the quarterly premium on his life insurance policy of one thousand pounds, amounting to five pounds fifteen shillings and sixpence, was due and payable on March fifteenth, failing which the policy and all claims to indemnity under it would lapse and be null and void. Rogers looked absently at the notice and then at the calendar on his desk. It indicated March sixteenth. As the date impressed itself on him, he glanced again at the printed slip which he held in his hand.

"By thunder!" he ejaculated. "It's a day too late!"

Gray reached for the notice and read it aloud, scrutinising the clauses in fine type, and hesitating sometimes in his caution to be sure that the obscure phrases in stilted language were not misunderstood. Rogers turned to the envelope, which he had dropped on the table. The face of it was obscured by a succession of cancellation and forwarding marks, written and struck out in turn, so that Kent's name, and the final address—"Care of *The Register*"—were the only things clear at first glance.

"Travelled a long while to get here a day late," he growled, as he found the earliest postmark, February the fifteenth, a month earlier. "I wonder where it's been?"

As he scanned the blotted and erased addresses, a puzzled look came into his face.

"That's queer," he said to Grayson, who was awaiting the solution. "This thing was directed first to our old boarding-house in Brisbane Street, where we haven't lived for four years. Then it went to the place in Pelham Court,

where Allan was staying before he went abroad. It's been to Southampton and to Liverpool before it found someone who knew where to send it. Why, look here!"—he interrupted himself excitedly—"it's not too late. They made a mistake and sent it to an old address. For three years they have been sending these notices addressed to him here, and I've paid 'em, every one, four times a year. This office is the address they have on their books. It's their mistake. I'll go over and fix it up."

Whereupon Rogers sought the office bookkeeper, explained the immediate need of money, got a cheque cashed, and made his way to the imposing-looking building where dwelt the Equinoctial.

There was just a shadow of doubt in his mind when he came to the cashier's window. The brief exchange of greetings ended, he pushed the notice, the envelope, and the gold through the grating and explained the delay.

The cashier was bland—even sympathetic.

"Now, that is really too bad," he admitted. "But you are a day late, and I don't see what can be done. You see, we have to be very strict about such things, even where there may be an apparently good excuse for non-payment."

Rogers was not good at fence.

"Do you mean to say," he half stammered, "that you're going to refuse this premium when the fault is in this office? You sent that notice to an old address, although you had the correct one, and had been sending letters to it for three years. I'll see the general manager."

The General Manager Himself was more bland than the cashier.

"This is such a pity," was his sympathetic murmur, when Rogers and the cashier had explained the situation; "but what can we do? We are bound by rules which we cannot alter. The policy was cancelled yesterday. You see, Mr. Kent's policy is merely an indemnity policy of the simplest form, having no



equities remaining after a premium due remains unpaid. The only way to secure a reinstatement is to obtain a certificate of health for Mr. Kent, and that, I fear, may be impossible."

"Health!" gasped Rogers, as he rose before the unctuous little man. "I tell you, he's lying at the point of death, as he has been for weeks, unconscious or delirious half the time. This policy is all he's got. He's been carrying it for eight years. There's his family. This looks like fraud to me. Why did you send that notice to the wrong address?" The sentences came hot from his anger.

"Now, my dear Mr. Rogers," cautioned the manager, "don't do us any injustice, I pray you. The Equinoctial is one of the largest and most respected financial institutions in the world. It is unfortunate—most unfortunate—that some clerk transcribed the wrong address in this instance; but I may say that life-insurance companies are under no obligation to send any premium notices whatever. They do it merely as a courtesy to their policy-holders. But the policies contain no stipulation for notices, and the debt is due when it is due. It is the business of the policy-holder to arrange for his payments, not our business to remind him of them."

Rogers left an oath behind, and carried his notice, his gold, and his rage with him back to the office.

\* \* \* \* \*

Solon Thorpe was a friendly lawyer, once in general practice, and now counsel for another life-insurance company. To him went Grayson, when Rogers told of his failure, to bespeak advice.

"You've got a case," Thorpe declared, after he heard the whole story, "if Kent dies. Any jury would give you a ver-



"ROGERS SPENT TEN MINUTES AT THE BEDSIDE ONE MORNING."

dict for the face of the policy without leaving their seats. The use of that old address on the notice at such a time, after three years of using the right one, is moral evidence of intent to defraud by diverting the necessary warning from such friends as might pay the premium. Mr. Kent's illness has been commonly known for two months. Evidently the Equinoctial thought it had a death-loss coming, and tried to avoid payment. Yes"—meditatively—"I'd like to argue that case before a jury. Policy carried eight years, wrong address, ill from service in South Africa—those cartoons that made us all laugh—family, five million corporation—I think I could get a

jury to recommend hanging the secretary, general manager, and directors. But—they've got lots of money, and when they appeal, they'll get one new trial on error, and another on some other technicality, and it is true that they do not have to send notices. Better try moral suasion first, Mr. Grayson, without a lawyer. Can't you newspaper boys think of something?"

And Grayson said they would try.

\* \* \* \* \*

The office of the Equinoctial was a dream of commercial beauty in mosaic floors, onyx wainscoting, gilded pillars, bronze electroliers, rosewood counters and mahogany desks, the whole done after designs by the General Manager Himself.

No doubt any one more reverent than Terry Long would have been more impressed by the evidences of wealth. But Terry had been on the local staff of *The Register* for five years, during which time frequent contact with the leading financiers had dulled his appreciation of their greatness. Furthermore, he weighed two hundred and thirty pounds, carried it lightly, was equally at home in the Rugby field or the ring, and owed no man anything, except the life-insurance premium he had come to pay. He, too, held a policy in the Equinoctial.

Long stood at the cashier's window, stooping to bring himself to a level with the man behind the gilded bars.

"Good morning, Mr. Long," said the cashier, remembering him well, by virtue of his size and his quarterly payments.

Long responded in his milder tones, the same suggesting, as had been remarked by one with a gift for mixed metaphor, a fog-horn with its foot on its soft pedal. Then he drew out his notice of premium payment due, handed some currency to the cashier, pocketed his receipt and change, and seemed ready to give place to those who were waiting in line behind him, when an apparent after-thought halted him.

"By the way," he remarked, relaxing the soft pedal just a little, "I see that you sent this notice to my correct address. I wanted to ask if that is to be the common practice, as in the past, or if the Kent matter is to be the precedent hereafter?"

The cashier grew a trifle red. Uncertain what was coming, he pleaded ignorance and lowered his guard.

"I don't know what you mean," he said. "Of course, notices are sent to the right address of policy-holders."

"Oh, don't you know?" queried Terry, sympathetically, the soft pedal raised a trifle more. "Well, I'll tell you all about it. Of course, you know Allan Kent—everybody knows Allan Kent," he observed, comprehensively, glancing around at those behind him, as if he were pleased to take them into his confidence.

"You see, Mr. Kent has been lying almost at the point of death for two months, broken down by his hard work in South Africa. Well, he's been carrying a policy in this company for several years, and a premium was due on it the day before yesterday. As usual, the notice was posted to him a month before. But instead of sending it to his address, as registered here and used for the last three years, it was directed to an address he has not used for that time, and so it was forwarded all over the country before it finally reached someone who knew where to send it."

The circle was growing, as people from across the room edged toward the big fellow. The cashier made a feeble attempt to avert the catastrophe.

"If you have any complaint to make, Mr. Long," he interjected with clerkly dignity, "you should make it to the General Manager Himself. You are blockading the window and delaying the customers."

"Oh, I don't know," responded Terry. "It's with you I always do my business, and it was you who said you didn't know what I meant. I don't suppose they're in any hurry. This is a good



story, and I think they'd rather like to hear it."

Whereupon, he continued inexorably to the end, the cashier making but one more futile effort at interruption, and subsiding when one of the scowling listeners showed signs of independent aggression and demanded his silence.

There were a number of men grouped about Long by this time, and his voice was no longer modulated, as he dropped his cumbrous ironies and said harsh things in harsh phrases.

"A fraud upon the dying—a theft from women," and some expressions even less mellifluous were winning manifest favour from the circle of auditors, when the General Manager Himself, rotund, red, bald and blustering, lumbered into position like heavy artillery. He had been summoned by a hasty message from the panic-stricken cashier, just as he was wondering what manner of voice it was, thus penetrating into the private office. What he heard on the way told him what was happening, and as he edged into the circle the harshest of the accusations met him fairly.

"Here, sir!" he ejaculated. "You can't talk that way in this office!"

"Can't!" bellowed Long, the loud pedal on at last. "By the gods, I'd like to know who'll stop me! If you're responsible for this dirty business, I'll have you out of your job before I drop it. If your bosses in the office have arranged it as a fixed policy, I'll take it out of them in publicity—free! Meanwhile, how do you like the sample? Good advertising, isn't it?" and he waved his hand comprehensively, to indicate the patrons of the office, who had halted their business errands to listen to the story. Not one was smiling. Not one sent a friendly glance to the General Manager Himself. Instead, they stayed close to Long, manifestly giving him their sympathy and support, one shaking his hand, another offering a card.

He had finished his errand, and

turned to go. The latest antagonist gasped in helpless rage, but sought to counteract the harm by an explanatory conversation with an old and valued policy-holder, who showed few signs of patience. Two men who had been waiting at a desk to sign applications for insurance, told the agent that he need not continue filling up the blanks. Then they followed Long and joined him on the stairs to ask for more information.

\* \* \* \* \*

That afternoon a telephone message reached the General Manager Himself, from John W. Sanders, head of a wholesale house, club-man, and well known in public life. He asked that an agent be sent to him with policy-forms, rates and application-blanks, explaining that he wanted to take out additional insurance to the amount of five thousand pounds or perhaps ten thousand pounds, and that his partner was of the same mind. Whereupon, this being what insurance men consider "easy," the agent of the Equinoctial went smilingly to the place appointed.

Never were conditions, rates and terms more satisfactory. Never was business more easily secured. Application-blanks were filled, an appointment for medical examination was made, the business preliminaries were at an end, and a social moment arrived.

"By the way," queried the merchant, "did you hear how the Eldorado Life treated Allan Kent?"

The agent had heard nothing. Not present at the morning skirmish in the Equinoctial office, no gossip of it had reached him. But he knew Allan Kent and had enjoyed his cartoons, he knew the Eldorado as his dearest enemy and most hated rival in the business. And as Sanders told the story—perhaps not as graphically as had Long—the agent filled in all the harrowing details out of his vivid imagination, and emphasised the gross injustice and manifest fraud of the affair with joyful fervour.

"Only the Eldorado would do such a trick," he averred. "The Equinoctial is too careful of its friendship with policy-holders to tolerate a thing of that kind. Kent is a great man, and it is a shame they tried to cheat him." And on he plunged, heaping obloquy on the Eldorado.

The merchant assented to it all with enthusiasm.

"I'm glad to hear you say it," he continued. "Of course, I would not care to do business with such a company. The story is all over the club, and everybody seems to be sore on the company. They don't forget those cartoons of Kent's."

At ten the next morning the agent called at the office of Sanders & Kay with the company's physician, who was to make the customary medical examinations. Mr. Sanders met them sympathetically.

"I'm so sorry," the merchant explained. "Last night, at the club, I learned that the affair of Kent's insurance was not with the Eldorado, but with the Equinoctial. Too bad about the mistake. But, of course, I couldn't think of insuring with your company after what you said of such methods last night. Such a surprise, isn't it?" And he bowed them out, speechless and stupefied.

The agent raced to the office for an explanation. Fifteen thousand pounds of insurance was gone a-glimmering, from his calculations, and a story was in circulation in club-land that he would not be able to live down in a year.

It was a stormy half-hour that he spent in the private office, for even the General Manager Himself may not be too severe with a first-class agent. While they were in the midst of the matter, by strange coincidence another agent arrived with identical ill-fortune to report

—a patron who had written that he wanted insurance, a prompt call, a favourable reception, an application for a policy, the story of how the Eldorado had played a trick to cancel Allan Kent's risk, the righteous wrath of the agent at such methods, the discovery that it was the Equinoctial itself which was involved, and then the prompt termination of business dealings.

So it was for two days. The office of the Equinoctial was harried from a dozen directions. Agents met the story in the most surprising quarters, until they began to rebel against calling on men who wrote asking for information on rates and policies. It remained only for the story to reach the rival agencies.

The General Manager Himself capitulated. On the third morning, came a letter addressed to Allan Kent, in care of *The Register* office. Rogers opened it, to find this message:—

"DEAR SIR,—We find, upon investigation, that a subordinate clerk inadvertently posted your last notice of premium due on Policy 33, 121 A, to an obsolete address. Fearing that the notice did not reach you in time, and considering you one of our most valued policy-holders, we have issued a receipt to you for the amount of your premium, thus making your policy secure, and have charged you with same as a loan, payable at your convenience. We take pleasure in handing you receipt as noted. Of course, this is somewhat irregular, technically, but it is the invariable disposition of the Equinoctial to deal liberally with all its patrons. Trusting that you will appreciate our friendly spirit in the matter, I am,

"Yours very sincerely,

"JOS. SPURGEON,

"General Manager."





THE CRACK SCOUTS OF THE NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE.

## TALES OF THE NORTH WEST MOUNTED POLICE

By AGNES C. LAUT

WHEN the west-bound train creeps past the rolling wheat fields of the Canadian North-West into the endless reaches of the ranching lands where lonely houses stand against the offing solitary as sails at sea, civilization seems to be receding farther and farther rearward.

Northward, the browned hills and deep-cut ravines full of what the white man calls "sloughs," the Indian "sky-coloured water," billow over the skyline, a heaving sea of prairie. In that direction, you know the outermost limit of these fenceless fields must be the Arctic Circle. Southward, is the same sweep of hill and valley; and you know in this direction there is an imaginary line called the Boundary. Between, zigzagging across the sloughs, wriggling link by link like a measuring worm around the ravines, is the dwarfed form of the crawling train. As the train rushes past, a blind owl flops up stupidly from the stone crest of some hill. With an eye to the manoeuvres of the owl, buzzards and eagles are lirting overhead in a sort of dreary enjoyment of desolation. At the sandy end of the sloughs,

cranes are stretching their long necks Coyotes skulk under shelter of cliffs the same colour as their own hide. Badgers hulk clumsily among the gopher mounds; and the traveller will be a very blind observer, indeed, if he does not catch a glimpse of a red fox loping over the prairie. The Indian encampments with blanketed braves and red-skirted squaws lounging against the white tepees only increase the impression of utterly primitive wilds. Civilization has receded so far behind that it has dropped over that rearward horizon altogether.

And yet it is well known that any one—man or woman, tenderfoot or old timer—can travel through these wilds from the Boundary to the Arctic in perfect safety from all harm except the elements. Of that, too, the traveller can see proof in some rancher's daughter, wind-blown and full of life, reining up her pony to let the train go past. She has ridden ten, fifteen, perhaps twenty miles from the ranch house on the far offing. She has come alone and will go back alone, and is safer than if she were in the thick of a populous city. Such



MORNING DRILL OF THE MOUNTED POLICE STATIONED AT REGINA, NORTH-WEST TERRITORY.

conditions in the early settlement of a region populated by a hundred thousand savages are without a parallel in the history of this continent. In Quebec and New England, in Ohio and Arizona, and Mexico and Minnesota, every forward step of settlement has been marked by bloodshed and massacres that are untellable in horror.

Even as the traveller asks himself the reason of the difference, there looms up the living explanation: a solitary horseman, white helmet, white gauntlets, red coat and gold braid, black trousers with yellow stripes, riding boots and, perhaps, a carbine. On he swings, over the prairie, at the loping gait of all plains horses, erect as a British cavalryman, but unlike the English rider never leaving the leather, sitting tight, a part of his horse, in harmony with its every motion so that there is no jar, exactly as the cowboy rides. Presently he stops, still as a statue. A flash of light burns in the sky above his head—he is off, galloping in the opposite direction. He is on patrol; and the scout, whose beat is next to his, has heliographed

some signal so that the two are scouring the prairie, ten, twenty, thirty miles apart, on the lookout for some desperado heading into the country, for some horse thief, or "calf-rustler," or smuggler of illicit wares to the Indians. Next to the second patrol may be a third, next to the third a fourth, so that a line of prairie two hundred miles wide is being patrolled as thoroughly as if there were police stationed at every five miles. This mobile force, sent out in detachments of one, two, three, seldom more than four, trained to independent action and self-reliance, always on the move to prevent rather than to punish crime, is the secret of the safety that has prevailed in the North-West Territories since that country was taken over from the fur companies.

It was in the early seventies that the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company ceased and the Dominion Government took over judicial rights in all that vast territory which lies like an American Russia between the Boundary and the North Pole. The ending of the monopoly was the signal for an inrush





THE BAND OF THE NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE.

of adventurers. Gamblers, smugglers, criminals of every stripe, struck across from the Missouri into the Canadian territory at the foothills of the Rockies. Without a white population, these raff adventurers could not ply their usual disreputable traffic. The only way to wealth was by the fur trade; and the easiest way to obtain the furs was by smuggling whisky into the country in small quantities, diluting this and trading it to the natives for pelts. Chances of interference were *nil*; for the Canadian Government was thousands of miles distant without either telegraph or railway connection. But the game was not without its dangers. The country at the foothills was inhabited by the Confederacy of the Blackfeet—Bloods, Piegans and Blackfeet—"tigers of the prairie" when sober, and worse than tigers when drunk. The Missouri whisky smugglers found they must either organize for defence or pay for their fun by being exterminated. How many whites were massacred in these drinking frays will never be known; but all about Old Man's River and Fort

Macleod are gruesome landmarks known as the places where such and such parties were destroyed in the seventies.

The upshot was that the Missouri smugglers emulated the old fur traders and built themselves permanent forts; Robbers' Roost, Stand Off, Freeze Out, and most famous of all Whoop-Her-Up, whose name for respectability's sake has recently been changed to "Whoo-Pup," with an innocent suggestiveness of some poetic Indian title. Whoop-Up—as it was known to plainsmen—was palisaded and loop-holed for musketry, with bastions and cannon and an alarm bell. The fortifications of this place alone, it is said, cost over two thousand pounds, and it at once became the metropolis of the whisky smugglers. Henceforth, only a few Indians were allowed inside the fort at a time, the rest being served through the loop holes.

But the Blackfeet, who loved a man-hunt better than a buffalo hunt, were not to be balked. The trail by which the whisky smugglers came from Fort Benton zigzagged over the rolling

prairie mainly following the bottoms of the precipitous coulees and ravines for a distance of two hundred miles to Whoop-Up. Heavy wagons with canvas tops and yokes of fifteen and twenty oxen drew the freight of liquor through the devious passes that connected ravine with ravine. The Blackfeet are probably the best horsemen in the word. There were places where the defiles were exceptionally narrow, where the wagons got mired, where oxen and freight had to be rafted across rain-swollen sloughs. With a yelling of incarnate fiends that would have stampeded more sober brutes than oxen drawing kegs of whisky, down swooped the Blackfeet at just these hard spots. Sometimes the raids took place at night, when tethers would be cut and the oxen stampeded with the bellowing of a frightened buffalo herd. If the smugglers made a stand there was a fight. If they drew off, the savages captured the booty, and there was also a fight; but in this case the victims were the Indians killed in their own drunken brawls. Then the smugglers organized their famous Spitz Cavalry to escort the freighters and defend the fort. Officers were named and regulations drawn up, after which the demoralizing trade went on merrily for the smugglers, but to the utter degradation of the natives.

Protests from the fur company defrauded of lawful trade, and petitions from the missionaries, called the attention of the Dominion Government to the outrageous state of affairs at the foothills of the Rockies. An act was passed for the formation of a mounted constabulary. The spice of danger, deviltry and adventure in the duties of the new force appealed to the popular mind. Men of all ranks tumbled over each other in their eagerness to enlist. Sons of lords, generals and famous novelists enrolled shoulder to shoulder with discharged "Tommies" and Indian scouts; and, curiously enough, the

Mounted Police retain the same heterogeneous elements to-day as when the first enlistment took place. Three hundred men were enrolled and drilled; and in July, 1874, the Mounted Police began their famous march of two thousand miles across the prairie to the foothills, two divisions striking off northward, one only coming to Old Man's River, the smugglers' stronghold, where Colonel Macleod at once marked off the square for a fort on an island in the river. Cottonwood logs were daubed with mud, whitewashed outside and lined with factory cotton inside. Then a British flag was hoisted in opposition to the smugglers' regime.

Here, then, was a handful of men surrounded by a confederacy of Indians noted for their aggressive ferocity. Not a day's ride distant was a fort much stronger than that of the Mounted Police, with cannon, abundance of ammunition and provisions, and four times as many outlaws as there were police. Inside the smugglers' stockades was whisky enough to win the whole Blackfeet Confederacy as allies for the traders. The first thing was to secure the friendship of the Indians. Colonel Macleod invited the chiefs to the new fort. They were *fêted* by the police, given exhibitions of military skill, and shown the cannon. Pointing out a tree more than a mile away, the colonel bade the chiefs watch it. The next instant a cannon-ball tore it up by the roots. That was a better shot than the old mortar over at the smugglers' fort could make. The Blackfeet were greatly impressed; and their visit marked the beginning of a friendship between the Mounted Police and the Indians that has lasted to the present day.

The smugglers were too wary to call down attack from the entire Mounted Police force by attempting armed resistance. They played the well-known game of smugglers the world over. Whoop-Up lay in the bottom of a deep ravine. On one side was a defile





INDIAN SCOUTS.

through the hills named "Slide-In." On the other side was a narrow pass called "Slide-Out." When the redcoats rode clanking through "Slide-In" the smugglers quietly slipped away through "Slide-Out." Patrols scoured the boundary line to the south. Scouts dressed in civilian clothes haunted the south side of the line, and sent word for the patrols to look out for bands of smugglers nearing the boundary along the Benton trail; but instead of smugglers, behold four priests with their personal belongings on a train of pack mules to the fore! But the men who entered "Slide-In," dressed in black robes, left "Slide-Out" in the buckskin regimentals of frontiersmen. The police, of course, exercised the right to search the incoming freight of the ox trains for dutiable goods; and, without going into details in each case, it may be stated that liquor was found in every imaginable disguise—in piano boxes, in stoves, in barrels of coal oil, in bags of flour, inside the yellow rim of a cheese—yes, and to be perfectly explicit, inside what were ostensibly hymn-books and coffins. The most common form of smuggling liquor to the Indians then, as it is today, was in bottles labelled "Perfume," "Painkiller," "Ginger," "Medicine."

The smugglers were on the most friendly terms with the police, and frequented Fort Macleod just as the police frequented Whoop-Up; and sometimes surprising discoveries were made during these friendly visits. The

story is told of an officer absently poking his cane in the ground as he stood talking to an old trader in front of the man's store. What the sensations of the trader were when the officer's cane suddenly clicked against the iron hoop of a buried barrel one may guess. An excavation in front of that store resulted in the spilling of several kegs of liquor. The complete gamut of smugglers' wiles had soon been exhausted by police vigilance. Spilt liquor was poor profit. In a few years the smugglers had either quietly withdrawn from the country or taken up more lawful methods of barter. In a force so promiscuously recruited as the Mounted Police, there were sure to be backsliders. To them the whisky traffic offered irresistible temptation. It was so easy to drain the kegs and fill them with water before reporting at headquarters that they had been confiscated and smashed.

Such was the origin of the North-West Mounted Police force sent to patrol and maintain law in a region larger than all the states of the American Union west of the Mississippi. So excellent was the work of the force that when settlement came in, people preferred the services of the Mounted Police to a local constabulary. The first enlistment of 300 was increased to 500 during the construction of the railway, and to 1,000 during the Half-Breed Rebellion of 1885.

The end of open whisky traffic did

not mean that smuggling had entirely ceased. In those days, liquor was not only forbidden for the Indians, but prohibited to white men throughout the entire Territories, except by special government permit for small quantities. The duty of watching all incoming freight, whether by pack train or ox-cart or railway, fell to the police. The most likely avenue of illicit trade was, of course, along the Boundary, an imaginary line 1,800 miles long with absolutely no settlement at its western end. The deep gullies and rolling hills offered countless hiding places for smugglers. Only the most vigilant patrolling of the Boundary could check the traffic. In summer time, with a good horse under him and frequent relays, this was pleasant enough for a scout; but when winter came with blinding blizzards on fenceless prairies and a temperature that froze the mercury at forty-five below zero, there was work to test the mettle of heroes.

Not long after Fort Macleod was established, urgent occasion arose to send a dispatch to a distant post in the south, warning the officer to be on the lookout for an incoming desperado. The thermometer stood at thirty-five below zero. It was night; and the north wind was humming with that peculiar half growl, half croon, which, every westerner knows, foretells a blizzard. To delay until the storm had passed would let a criminal, hunted for months, slip through the patrols. And then, the policeman's first consideration is duty, *not* the preservation of his own life. The question was—who was the best man to go. A scout of Indian blood would be the most likely to get through a storm without losing his way; for the native rider "travels by the wind," that is, when the white darkness of snow and tempest wipes out all points of the compass, the Indian, like the moist-nosed moose, gets the feel of the wind on his face, knows which direction the wind was coming from when the

sun disappeared, and so gains the points of his compass. Under no conditions whatever will a good Indian scout loose his way; but then, under no condition whatever can a scout of Indian blood be tempted to set out when a storm is brewing. On the other hand, it was not wise to tempt desertion in a land 2,000 miles from fresh recruits, by demanding impossible tasks of men who could as easily ride south over the Boundary and be free, as to a distant police post in the teeth of a storm.

The choice fell on a young man from a home of luxury in an eastern city. He was light, wiry, a swift rider, a splendid pathfinder and one of the most trusted scouts. There was not yet much snow; so he set out on horseback with snow shoes strapped to his saddle. The storm did not break for some hours; and it was hoped that he had reached the police post. A week passed. He did not return. A second messenger was sent. The first had never reached his destination. When spring came, thawing the snow, no sign of horse or rider was found on the prairie. It was commonly thought that one more name must be added to the black list of deserters. But by chance, a detachment set out for the north. The bones of a saddled horse were found on the lee side of a cliff. That disproved the scout's desertion; for why would a deserter travel north? Then it was remembered that the wind had veered completely from north-east to south-east; and the rider, knowing that the wind should be on his back, had turned north. The body was found on the bank of a river. His horse had evidently given out; and the brave fellow had pressed on till the river bank told him that he was off the trail. Then the long frost sleep had claimed him.

Almost as unfortunate was another scout sent with a dispatch to one of the smaller outposts. It was towards spring, when the mid-day sun thaws the surface of the snow and the night





CHURCH PARADE AT MACLEOD, NORTH-WEST TERRITORY.

frosts harden the melted crusts to a glare of ice as dazzlingly bright as the blinding flash of sunlight from polished steel. The thaw had crusted over the trail, and the scout had to keep a sharp eye on the way not to lose the path altogether. Suddenly the mid-day sun developed extraordinary hues. Magenta, purple and black patches began to dance on the snow alternately with wheels and rockets of cheese-coloured fire. Then the light went black altogether, though the man knew that it was broad day. He had become snow-blind. The only thing was to give his horse the bit. The horse stood stock still. By that he knew that he had lost the trail altogether, or the broncho would have followed any visible path. He wheeled the horse about. It still refused to go on; and then the man inferred that the crust of ice had been so hard that the horse could not follow back the way it had come. That night the trooper slept under saddle blankets, with the faithful horse standing sentry.—For five days the policeman wandered blindly over the prairie, losing all count of time, eating snow to quench his thirst and sleeping in the holes that the broncho had pawed through the ice-crust to the under-grass. The trooper was now too weak to mount and keep the saddle. As a last hope the thought struck him

that if he unsaddled his horse and turned it loose, it might find its way back to the fort, and so notify his friends that he was lost. He did this; but the faithful creature refused to leave the man lying on the snow, and stood over him in spite of all his efforts to drive it off. The pathetic scene enacted between these two—the blind and half-dead man and the affectionate horse well able to look after itself—can better be imagined than described. On the sixth day the mail-carrier found the pair. The trooper was severely frozen; but rider and horse lived to see many another day's service.

Sometimes the outlaw who is leading the scouts these perilous races fares worse than the Mounted Police. One long vigil for a criminal heading from Montana to the Canadian boundary ended in the patrol espying a black form writhing helplessly on the snow. The refugee was picked up snow-blind and so badly frozen that his hands and feet had to be amputated. He was cared for in the hospital of the barracks till relatives came and took him away, the police deciding that he had suffered sufficient punishment.

It is not surprising that men who had served such an apprenticeship at scouting should have distinguished themselves at the Half-Breed Rebellion. Some of the scouts who attached them-

selves to the force at that time were guilty of acts that must always bring the blush of shame to the white man ; but these were recruits picked up temporarily for special service, and their provocation was great. For instance, one of the regular police under Inspector Dickens, son of Charles Dickens, the novelist, was attacked by a mounted Indian. Just as the trooper turned to face his assailant the Indian's horse stumbled, throwing the rider to the ground. The white man's hand was on the trigger of his weapon ; but to shoot a fallen foe would not be true to the traditional code of police honour. A moment later the enraged redskin had leapt to his feet, and the policeman fell, shot through the heart. At another time the police scouts came suddenly on the mutilated bodies of two comrades. Not satisfied with laving their hands in the blood of the slain, according to the savage superstition that such an act imparts bravery, the squaws had defiantly stuck the hearts of the dead on poles directly across the path of the advancing scouts. These acts should be remembered when stories are told of Indians found scalped.

As the troops approached one beleaguered post, where twenty-five Mounted Police were defending 500 refugees, half of whom were suspected to be in sympathy with the rebels, the scouts were sent forward under cover of night to ascertain the state of the assailants outside the post. The chief scout was famous for his daring, and, leaving horses to the rear, scattered his companions in a semi-circle, and gradually approached inside the Indian lines. When they were in the thick of the rebels a fire broke out in the village, lighting up the night. The scout dropped to hiding in some long grass, where, by the light of the fire, he could watch what the Indians were doing. Creeping forward, he was peering through the grass, when an Indian voice grunted out a cough directly in his ear, and the scout

found himself cheek by jowl with a tawny-skinned tatterdemalion, who evidently mistook the policeman for a fellow rebel. Exactly what conversation took place between the two is not related ; but the scout did not enlighten the Indian as to the error, and as soon as opportunity offered slipped back among the grasses and fired the shot that was to be the signal for the troops.

The same swift, decisive self-reliance has characterised all the dealings of the Mounted Police with the Indians. In those days the prison where criminals from the Territories were confined was at Winnipeg, 2,000 miles by pack trail from the outermost police posts. To have kept a horse thief at the scene of his action in a reserve of several thousand Indians, with only a defence of twenty or thirty policemen, would have invited disaster. In one case, scouts discovered that the Blackfeet were planning to rescue their brave as he was being driven across the plains. A detachment of police rode away east *without* the prisoner. Quietly, another detachment left at night, and also rode away to the east. Finally, a third detachment *with* the prisoner slipped out from Fort Macleod at midnight. The first two companies had spread themselves out in a patrol with relays of fresh horses for the entire distance between Fort Macleod and Fort Walsh, which was the next eastern fort. Only stopping long enough to hitch fresh teams to the wagons, the escort had dashed across 300 miles to Fort Walsh before the Blackfeet knew that their warrior had been carried off.

Latterly the duties of the Mounted Police have been of a more peaceful nature, for the most part those of a mobile constabulary. These duties cover a region 1,000 miles wide, 500 miles from north to south. Boundary patrols are still maintained to intercept the horse thief who drives a ranch band across the line to be quickly sold ; and on the Boundary patrol the police



annually travel more than a million miles. The "rustler," who appropriates unbranded animals for his own herds, must also be watched, traced, and punished. Prairie fires that might sweep away the year's food for the herds must be guarded and checked. Foreign settlers who know neither the laws nor the climate of the country must be advised and frequently helped. Gold seekers pouring into the frozen north are under surveillance, too. All these duties distribute the seventy-nine odd detachments of police from the International Boundary to the very gates of the Arctic in Yukon.

Listening to the conversation of the Mounted Police, as one encounters them everywhere in the North-West, in the red coat and white helmet of dress parade or the sombrero and khaki of scouting costume, it is distinctly evident that they are men of a different stripe from the Tommy Atkins of the British

regulars. The Mounted Policeman is a *head*, not an automaton nor a flunkey. This was curiously illustrated during the visit of the Prince of Wales to the Territories last year. As the royal train drew in to one of the frontier towns, two liveried outrunners dashed breathlessly to the platform, shouting excitedly for the police "to get out the royal horses." The troopers of the university type smiled and said nothing; but one of the frontiersmen in khaki frowned and took a bite of chewing tobacco.

The two little men in livery became apoplectic.

"Don't you men hear? Get out the horses? Whose going to get out the horses?"

The trooper in khaki again calmly took consolation for the insult from his tobacco. "Have some? No? Horses? Did you say *horses*? Well—don't burst your buttons! What do you think *you* are here for? Get 'em out yourself."

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## THE BEAUTIFUL MORNING

### I.

BIRDS in the blossoms sing sweet to the skies;  
Suns set in shadows, but bright stars arise,  
And joy, at the last, is the sweeter for sighs,  
And we drift to a beautiful morning!

### II.

Bitter the crosses, and sad all the cares,  
But ever a rose in the thorns o' the years,  
And the bright smile of Love in a tempest of tears,  
And we drift to a beautiful morning!

### III.

Kiss hands to the trouble—take heart in the strife,  
Though the sky with the black clouds and thunder is rife;  
We shall reap in God's sunlight the lilies of life,  
As we drift to a beautiful morning!

## "GOLDEN FLEECE"

### THE ADVENTURES OF A FORTUNE-HUNTING EARL

By DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.—Arthur Gordon-Beauvais, Earl of Frothingham, after a most dispiriting reverse in New York, has decided to try his fortunes in Boston. His friend and adviser, Honoria Longview, had urged him to accept Mrs. Staunton's invitation to spend ten days at her house in Beacon Street. Acting on this advice he has there met the wealthy, if not the beautiful, Miss Cecilia Allerton, and the dashing Mrs. "Ridgie," Mrs. Staunton's daughter-in-law, together with a numerous company of the younger and, as Mrs. Staunton *mère* is inclined to think it, the fast set. In response to her father's wishes, Cecilia would have married Frothingham, but before the engagement is announced, she receives, through Mrs. Ramsay, a spiritualist in whom she has implicit trust, a message, supposedly from her dead lover, forbidding her to marry Frothingham. In his disappointment, he proceeds to Washington, and is introduced to Mr. Ballantyne, a Western Senator; and while the latter is entertaining a number of his constituents, is about to attend, with Mrs. Ballantyne and her younger daughter, a dinner at Senator Pope's, which the President will attend.

#### XII.

POPE, as Mrs. Ballantyne explained to Frothingham, was an Eastern Senator—a multi-millionaire, sent to the Senate because he practically supported—that is, "financed"—the machine of his party in his State, besides making large contributions to its national machine. "So the 'Boss,' as they call the leader of the party in that State," she said, "sold Mr. Pope one of the Senatorships, keeping the other for himself. Mr. Ballantyne is the leader, the master, of the party in his State and, while he's too modest to tell it, is one of the masters of the party in the nation. He could be President if it weren't for the disgusting prejudice among the people against all who happen to have a little something"—"a little something" being Mrs. Ballantyne's modest way of speaking of their millions. "But," she went on, "old Mr. Pope is a nonentity. He sits in his seat and votes the way they tell him to and is nice to everybody. Mr. Ballantyne suspects that he's getting ready to buy the Vice-Presidency."

"How much does that cost?" asked Frothingham.

"It'll cost him half a million if the chances of our party's carrying the election are good; if they're not so good, perhaps he can get it for a quarter of a million. But they may not dare nominate him. They may have to take some popular poor man. The 'many-

headed monster,' as Shakespeare calls it, has been grumbling of late. We have a hard task in our country, Lord Frothingham, to keep the people with property in control."

"It's the same all over the world, nowadays, I fancy," said Frothingham. "One has to apologise for being well born or rich or for living in decent style. The trouble with the lower classes at home is that they don't have to work hard enough. They used to be too busy to make themselves and everybody uncomfortable by doing what they call thinking."

"That's the trouble with our lower classes, too," answered Mrs. Ballantyne. "We educate too much."

The carriage rushed into the brilliantly lighted entrance of Senator Pope's house. Frothingham saw Ysobel's face, saw that she was having a violent attack of silent laughter. And he understood why. "The young 'un has a sense of humour," he said to himself. "It's ridiculous for these beggars to pose and strut before they've had time to brush the dirt off their knees and hands."

As they entered the drawing-room Frothingham's attention riveted upon two gilt armchairs ensconced in a semi-circle of palms and ferns. "For the President and his wife," said Ysobel. "They're dining here to-night, you know. This is the first President in a long time who has accepted invitations below the Cabinet circle. He comes to Senator



Pope's because they're old friends. It's quite an innovation and has caused a deal of talk. But I don't blame him. Where's the use in being President if you can't do as you please?"

Mrs. Pope, stout and red and obviously "flustered," came bustling up. After she had greeted them she said: "Lord Frothingham, you're to take my daughter Elsie in to dinner." Then to Mrs. Ballantyne: "Oh, my dear, why didn't you warn me of the quarrel between the Cabinet women and the Speaker's family. Whatever *shall* I do? Mrs. Secretary Mandon's here, and so are the Speaker and his wife."

"I'd send Grace Mandon in ahead of the Speaker's wife, if I were you," replied Mrs. Ballantyne. "I've no patience with the pretensions of the House. It's distinctly the commonest branch of the Government, while the Cabinet is next to the President."

"But," objected Mrs. Pope, plaintively, "the Speaker is *so* influential and really fierce about precedence, and his wife has *such* a tongue and *such* a temper, and neither he nor she *ever* forgives."

"Do as you like, of course," said Mrs. Ballantyne stiffly. Being of the Senate it exasperated her that the House should be placed ahead of it.

Just then a murmur ran round the room—"The President! The President!" Those who were seated rose, conversation stopped and the orchestra began to play. "Bless my soul," muttered Frothingham, "they're playing 'God Save the King!'" And then he remembered that the Americans had, as he put it, "stolen our tune and set a lot of rot about themselves to it." The President and his wife entered, he frowning and red and intent upon the two gilt chairs. Mrs. Pope curtsied, and her husband contracted his stiff old figure in a comical half-salaam. All bent their heads and a few of the young people, among them Ysobel, curtsied.

"See him looking at those chairs?" said she to Frothingham.

Frothingham nodded.

"He's awfully sour at the etiquette here," she went on. "I suppose he's afraid the country'll find out about it and cut up rough. He's smashing right and left, and every one's wondering when he'll throw out the gilt chairs."

But his courage apparently failed him, for he and his wife advanced to the "thrones" and seated themselves. No one else sat, all moving about to get the partners indicated on the little gilt and crested cards they had found in envelopes addressed to them and laid upon the tables in the dressing-rooms. Frothingham examined Elsie Pope and saw that she was small and slight, square in the shoulders, thin in the neck, her hair of an uncertain shade of brown, her eyes common-place, her features irregular. "She looks a good-tempered soul," he said to himself, searching resolutely for merits. And then he noted that her hands were red, and that she had flat, rather wide wrists. "A good plain soul," he added. He sat silent, waiting for her to begin to entertain him—he hadn't got used to the American custom of the men entertaining the women; and the New York and Boston women, acquainted with the British way, had humoured him. But he waited in vain. At last he stole a glance at her, and noted the flutter of a humour-curve at the corner of the mouth. "A shrewd little thing, I suspect," he thought. And he said to her, "No—really I don't bite."

Her eyes twinkled. "I was beginning to be afraid you didn't bark, either," she said.

His expression retired behind his eyeglass. "Nor do I, unless I'm bid."

"I like to be talked to—I'd so much rather criticise than be criticised."

"What do you like to hear about?" he asked.

"About the man who's talking. It's the only subject he'll really put his heart into, isn't it?"

Frothingham smiled faintly, as if

greeting an old and not especially admired acquaintance.

"I'm so disappointed," she said presently. "All winter I've had the same man take me in everywhere—you know, we follow precedence very closely here in Washington. And, when I found I was to have a new man, I had *such* hopes! The other man and I had got bored to death with each other. And now—you're threatening to be a failure!"

Frothingham did not like this—it was pert for a woman to speak thus to him; he resented it as a man and he resented it as Lord Frothingham. "That's a jest, isn't it?" he drawled. "We English, you know, have a horribly defective sense of American humour."

"No, it wasn't a jest," she replied. "It was a rudeness, and I beg your pardon. I thought to say something smart, and—I missed. Let's change the subject. Do you see that intellectual-looking man with the beard on the other side of the table—next to Ysobel Ballantyne?"

"The surly chap?"

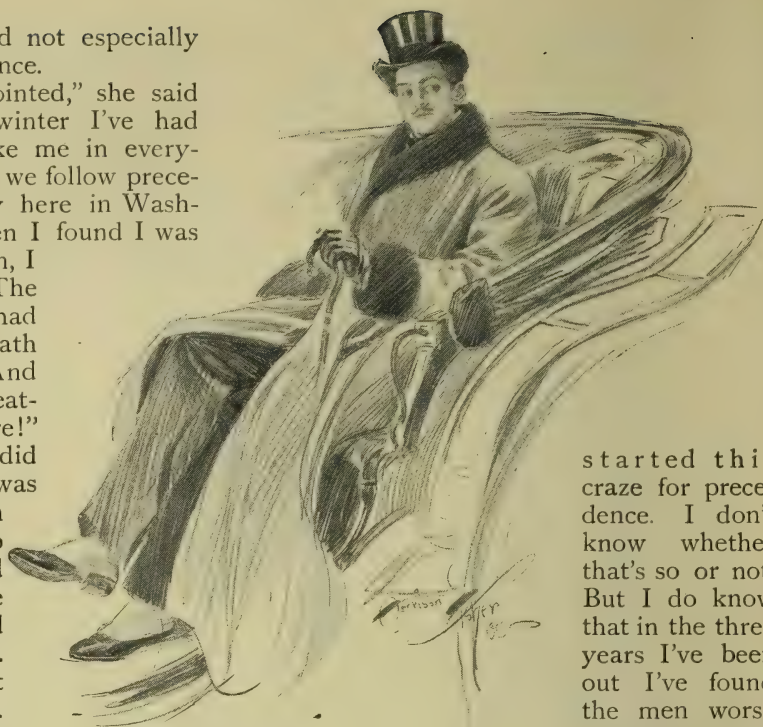
"Yes—and he's surly because mamma has made a dreadful mistake. She's put him two below the place his rank entitles him to. He'll act like a savage all evening."

"Fancy! What a small matter to fly into a rage over."

"A small matter for a large man, but a large matter for a small man. Sometimes I think all men are small."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because of what I've seen in Washington. They say the women



PRINCE DI RONTIVOGLI.

started this craze for precedence. I don't know whether that's so or not. But I do know that in the three years I've been out I've found the men worse than the women.

And those

things look so much pettier in a man, too."

"But I thought there wasn't any rank in this country."

"So I thought—I was educated in France. I believe in rank and all that—it seems to me absurd to talk about equality. But I despise this silly squabble over little places that last only a few years at most. As Mr. Boughton was saying—you know Mr. Boughton?"

"You mean the Second Secretary at our Embassy?"

"Yes. He said to me only last night: 'America has an aristocracy just as we have, but gets from it all the evils and none of the good; all the pettiness, none of the dignity and sense of responsibility.'"

"But they tell me it's different—out West."

"I don't know. I can only speak of the East—especially of Washington. There isn't a capital in Europe or Asia,



the diplomats say, with so elaborate a system of rank and precedence as we have. Why, do you know, it's so bad that the fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-year clerks and their families have a society of their own between the circles of those who get eighteen hundred and those who get twelve hundred. And they'd rather die than mix with those who get less than they do."

"Really! Really, now!"

"And anything like a good time is almost impossible. It's precedence, precedence everywhere, always. You can't entertain informally."

"It must be as if one were laced in a strait-jacket."

"I'm going abroad next year, and am never coming back, if I can help it. I'm going where at least there's real rank to get excited about. I'll go with Ysobel and her mother—unless Ysobel decides to marry on this side."

Frothingham was internally agitated, but gave no sign of it.

"She's marrying either Mr. Boughton or that handsome Italian sitting next to Mrs. Ballantyne—the Prince di Rontivogli."

"Ah," said Frothingham. And to himself, "Just my rotten luck!"

"She makes no secret of it," continued Miss Pope, "so I'm not violating her confidence. She says she's determined to marry higher than her sister did. She likes Mr. Boughton better, though I should think she'd prefer the Prince—his face is ideal, and such manners! But, while Mr. Boughton is his granduncle's heir, and his granduncle is old and a widower—still—well, the dukedom might slip away from him. For instance, he might die before his granduncle."

"That would be ghastly for her, wouldn't it, now?" said Frothingham.

"It would kill poor Ysobel. She's *so* proud and ambitious! And that's why she has an eye for the Prince—he's of a frightfully old family, you know. One of his ancestors tried to poison Cesare

Borgia, and did succeed in getting himself poisoned or smothered or something thrilling. And they were an old, old family then. Oh, Ysobel is flying high. If her father would give her mother and her a free hand, I think she'd land a prince of some royal family."

Behind his mask Frothingham was hastily reforming his line of battle. The Ballantyne fortune was apparently inaccessible to an attack from a mere Earl; but he could keep it under surveillance while employing his main force against the Pope citadel, which seemed to be inviting attack. He did not fancy Miss Pope—she was too patently conscious of her cleverness, and it was of a kind that did not attract him, was not what he regarded as feminine; nor was she physically up to his standard for his Countess-to-be. But—she had the essential; and he had been in America nearly five months and had had two, practically three, failures.

For the rest of his two weeks at the Ballantynes' he spent as much time as he courteously could with Miss Pope. And when he joined Joe Wallingford at the New Willard, sharing his suite—and paying less than a third of the expenses—he was with her a large part of each day, driving with her, riding with her, lunching where she lunched, dining where she dined, dancing with her, walking with her, sending her flowers. In Boston and New York he had been somewhat hindered by the chaperon system, careless though it was. Here chaperoning was the flimsiest of farces, and he and Elsie were together almost as freely as if she were a man.

In his fourth week in Washington he called one afternoon to keep an engagement to walk with her at half-past four. She had not returned from a girl's luncheon to which she had gone. At ten minutes past five she came, full of apology for her delay—"I really couldn't leave. The lunch was over before three o'clock, but the Secretary of State's daughter was enjoying herself and,

though we were all furious with her, as we had other engagements, she wouldn't leave; and, of course, none of us could leave until she left. When she did finally take herself away, the Secretary of the Treasury's daughter had given up her engagement and had settled herself for the afternoon. She didn't leave until ten minutes ago. So there we were, penned in and forced to stay."

"Precedence again?" said Frothingham

"Precedence. It's outrageous that those two girls should show so little consideration."

"I've known the same sort of thing to happen at home," Frothingham assured her. "It's a mistake to bother with other people's feelings, don't you think?"

"It only makes them supersensitive and hard to get on with," replied Elsie. "I used to be considerate. Now I'm considerate only when it's positively rude not to be. Besides, I must expect to buy my way through the world. I never had any friends—though I used to think I had, when I was a fool and didn't know that just the sight of wealth makes human beings tie up their good instincts and turn loose the worst there is in them. Even when rich people are friendly with each other it's usually in the hope of getting some sordid advantage."

"Do you apply that to yourself or only to others?"

"It applies to me—it has applied to me ever since I found what sort of a world I was living in."

"I don't believe it, my dear girl," drawled Frothingham, the more convincingly for the lack of energy in his tone. And he gave her a quick, queer look through his eyeglass and was stolid again.

She coloured just a little. "Oh, I suppose I'd be as big a goose as ever if I should fall in love again."

"Again?"

She laughed. "I've been in love four times in the last four years, and almost

in love three times more. That's a poor record for a Washington girl—there are so many temptations, with all these fascinating foreigners streaming through. But I'm not counting the times I've been made love to in half a dozen modern languages—I and my father's money."

"Possibly you're unjust to some of the men who've said they admired you. They may not have attached so much importance to your father's money as—you do."

The thrust tickled her vanity—nature had given her an over-measure of vanity to compensate for her under-measure of charm. She looked pleased, though she said: "I don't deceive myself as to myself."

"A man might have been attracted to you because you had money," continued Frothingham dispassionately, "and might have stayed on for your own sake."

Elsie lifted her eyebrows. "Perhaps," she said. "I'll admit it's possible."

"And, honestly now, do you pretend that you'd marry a man who had nothing to offer you but love? What has attracted you in the men you've thought well of? You say there have been four—or, rather, four and three halves. Has any one of 'em been a poor devil of a nobody?"

Elsie hesitated; in the twilight he saw from the corner of his eye that her upper lip was trembling. They were walking near the tall, white, glistening monument, in the quiet street that skirts the grounds of the White House. "One," she said at last, in a low voice. "I didn't care especially for him. But sometimes I think he really did care for me—he was a wild, sensitive creature." She looked at Frothingham and smiled. "And when I get in my black moods I'm half sorry I sent him away."

"But you did send him away, didn't you?" Frothingham's expression and tone were satirical, yet sympathetic, too. "And you complain of men for being precisely as you are!"

"I hadn't thought of that," she admitted.



"I take it for granted the girl who consents to marry me will consent because she wishes to be a Countess." He drew closer to her—she looked her best in twilight hours, and he succeeded in putting as much tenderness into his voice as was necessary to enable so drawling and indifferent a person to create an impression of sentiment. "If I were walking here with the girl I wished to win, I'd say nothing of sentiment. I'd simply trust to the only thing I have that could possibly induce her to listen to me."

She glanced shyly at him—he thought her almost pretty.

"Do you think that would win her?" he asked in a low tone.

"I—don't—know," she replied, slowly. Her common-place voice had also been touched with the magic that had transformed her face.

"Won't you think of it?"

"If you wish," she murmured.

They went on in silence a few minutes, then she spoke in an attempt at her usual voice: "But we must turn back. I'll have just time to dress for dinner."

And he decided that he would say no more on the principal subject for several days. He thought he understood how to deal with American girls rather better now. "I'll give her a chance to walk round the trap," he thought. And then he reminded himself that it was hardly a trap—wasn't she getting the better of the bargain? "She's indulging in a luxury, while I'm after a desperate necessary. And, by Jove, it won't be easy not to make a face, if I get it—with her."

### XIII.

So confident was he—and so out of conceit with his impending success—that he took a three days' vacation, going up to New York with Wallingford to attend a ball for which Longview had hired half of Sherry's, and otherwise to amuse himself. The revisiting of the

scene of his early failure depressed him; he lost nearly a thousand dollars at roulette; he borrowed a thousand from Wallingford; he returned to Washington in the depths of the blues. And he found the posture of his affairs completely changed.

On the very day he gave Elsie the chance to become a Countess, Prince Rontivogli discovered that Ysobel Ballantyne was in love with Boughton and would risk his succeeding to the title. Rontivogli was not the man to waste time on impossibilities—indeed, he had no time to waste. He turned away from the beautiful Miss Ballantyne instantly, and with all the ardour of his fiery Southern nature laid siege to Elsie Pope. And, while Elsie was somewhat reserved in her welcome, he found an ally in her father, who thought it would sound extremely well to be able to say, "My daughter, the Princess."

Rontivogli was tall, had a clear, pallid skin, eloquent black eyes, the brow and nose and chin of an Italian patrician, the manners and speech of chivalrous courtesy to women which disguise profound contempt for their intelligence. He spoke English indifferently, French fluently.

When Frothingham, just returned from New York and still enshrouded in surly gloom, drove up to Pope's door, he saw Rontivogli's little victoria standing a few yards down the drive. Rontivogli was conducting himself in Washington as if he were rich, so plausibly that only the foreign element was without doubts as to the object of his visit to America. At sight of this trap Frothingham scowled. "What's that Italian doing here?" he said to himself, and his fear answered the question. When they came face to face in the parlour Elsie greatly enjoyed it. The Italian was smooth and urbane; Frothingham, careless of the feelings of a man he despised, was almost uncivil. He and Elsie talked for a few minutes, then she drew Rontivogli into the conversation.

The Prince answered in French, and French became the language. Frothingham spoke it far worse than Rontivogli spoke English, so he was practically excluded. He sat dumb and stolid, wondering why "the brute hasn't the decency to take himself off when I came last."

But "the brute" drew Elsie into a lively discussion on a book he had sent her and, because there was no break in the argument, was seemingly not impolite in lingering. It was almost an hour before he rose, kissed her hand, gave her an adoring look, said "*A bientôt*," and departed. But, although he was physically gone, he was actually still there—if anything, Frothingham was more acutely conscious of him.

"I don't believe Miss Ballantyne could stand that fellow," he said, conscious of tactlessness, but too angry to care. "I think all those Latins unendurable. They're a snaky lot, and their manners suggest waiters and valets."

Elsie flushed and slightly drew in the corners of her mouth, a sure sign that her temper had been roused in the worst way—through wounded vanity. "Oh, you British are so insular," she replied, "and so self-satisfied. Here in Washington we learn to appreciate all kinds of foreigners and to make allowances even for Englishmen"—that last with a mere veneer of good nature. "I think Rontivogli charming. He's so intelligent, and has so much temperament."

Frothingham recovered his self-control in presence of obvious danger. He looked calmly at her through his eyeglass. "No doubt you're right," he drawled. "Rontivogli's a decent enough chap, so far as I know, and for an Italian devilish clean looking, I must say."

Elsie had no intention of driving him off; in spite of the Italian's superiority in title and "temperament," she preferred the Englishman—she knew him better and in a more candid way. She became conciliatory and they were soon amicable

again. But Frothingham saw that his vacation had been perilously costly, that he must work to reinstate himself, that it was not a wise moment for reopening the matter of the engagement which only four days ago seemed all but settled. He found that Elsie was dining at the Italian Embassy, to go afterward to a ball at the Vice-President's to which he was invited. He spoke for several dances and left.

Boughton and he dined together at the Metropolitan Club. While they were having a preliminary cocktail Boughton told him, in confidence, that he was engaged to Ysobel Ballantyne. "So that's why I find Rontivogli poaching," thought Frothingham. And he said presently: "What do you know about that chap Rontivogli? He looks a queer 'un to me."

"Not a thing," replied Boughton. "I had all our fellows writing over to the other side, following him up. The answers thus far show nothing downright shady. He's down to a box of a house and a few acres just north of Milan. And that's swamped in mortgages. No one knows how he raised the wind for this trip. He seems to have a good bit of cash, doesn't he?"

"I'm particularly interested in knowing about him," continued Frothingham. "He's developed an astonishing interest in a girl friend of mine. I'd hate to see her taken in by a scamp. And I'm sure he's that."

"Oh," said Boughton. "Miss Pope?"

"Yes," replied Frothingham. "And she thinks well of him."

"I'll be glad to help you, old man. I shan't drop my inquiry as I'd intended."

"Thanks," said Frothingham. And they talked of other matters.

When he looked Elsie up at the Vice-President's that night for the first of the dances she had promised him, he found her on a rustic bench in the garden, almost screened from observation, Rontivogli beside her. The Italian's classic face



was aglow, and Frothingham saw that he had checked a torrent of enamoured eloquence. He saw, also, that Elsie was not pleased by the interruption. However, she left Rontivogli and went with him. As they entered the ballroom he said: "I don't care for this music, do you? Let's sit it out. Only"—he gave her a look of quiet raillery—"you must engage not to go back at your volcano until *my* dance is over."

"Volcano?" A smile of pleased vanity strayed into her eyes and out again.

"Yes—your Vesuvius, whose eruption I was brute enough to interrupt. Beastly of me, wasn't it?"

"Rontivogli seems to annoy you a great deal."

"He? Not in the least." And his tranquil eyeglass affirmed his falsehood. "But I assure you he'll spout all the fiercer for the interruption. I know those Southern chaps. I don't wonder we stand no show against 'em. I tossed the sponge as soon as I saw what he was about."

They were sitting on the stairs now and could talk without being overheard. "Possibly you may remember," he went on, "I said something that was rather important to me—last Thursday, down near the monument—at half-past six precisely, to be exact—I heard a clock strike as I finished. Do you recall it?"

Elsie was puzzled by his light, satirical tone. "Yes," she said. "I do vaguely recall that you said something vague."

"I didn't mean to be vague. But that doesn't matter now. I see there's no chance for me at present. And I wished to say to you that at least I sha'n't give up our delightful friendship. No matter what you do with your Italian, you'll feel that I'm your friend, won't you?" Frothingham said it as if he meant it; and to a considerable extent he did mean it—chagrined though he was, he fancied her so little in the rôle he had invited her to play that his prospective defeat found him

not utterly despondent. He had reasoned out his course carefully, and had come to the conclusion that his chance lay in posing as her disinterested friend. Perhaps she would confide in him, would give him the opportunity to advise and criticise—an admirable position from which to undermine and destroy his rival.

As Elsie had not fully made up her mind to Rontivogli, and as she saw nothing but advantage to her in keeping Frothingham "on the string," she responded to his frank and manly appeal. And she believed what he said, as she believed pretty much everything men told her; and she liked him better than ever. "If he were only a prince," she said to herself, regretfully, "and had temperament."

That same night she accepted Rontivogli; and when Frothingham came to lunch next day she told him.

"Well," he drawled, "I can't say I'm shouting glad. But I can honestly congratulate him. And—I hope you won't regret."

"We're not announcing the engagement for several days," she said.

"That's good. You don't mind my saying—you know we've agreed to be friends—but I think you—your father ought to make careful inquiry about him. I'm sure everything's all right, but—it's prudent."

Elsie smiled. "Oh, we have made inquiries," she said. "Besides, anyone can see what sort of man he is—anyone but a prejudiced Englishman."

"I don't deny I'm prejudiced. Is it surprising?" And he gave her a long look that might have meant anything or nothing. "But—one can't be too careful about foreigners."

"Foreigners!" Elsie laughed with good-humoured mockery. "And what are you?"

"Why, an Englishman. We don't count as foreigners here."

"No—but as stepbrothers, which is much more suspicious."

Frothingham found encouragement in her willingness to discuss her *fiancé* with him—it showed plainly how foreign she felt to Rontivogli, how friendly to him. A few afternoons later—it was the day after the dinner at which her engagement was formally announced—she went with Frothingham to call on “Madame Almansa” in her surroundings of Spartan simplicity. They found Ysobel and Boughton there also, and when Ysobel took Frothingham and Boughton into the small library adjoining the smaller drawing-room to look at some old prints “Sue” had brought with her from Spain, Elsie talked with “Sue” of the engagement.

Madame Almansa was chary of congratulations, full of cautionings and doubts. “I don’t wish to cast a shadow on your happiness, dear—for you *are* happy, aren’t you?”

“Indeed I am,” replied Elsie, convincingly. Rontivogli was an ideal lover; he could even sing his mad passion in a voice that was well trained and thrilling.

“But—you know my sad experience.” Madame Almansa sighed like Medea thinking on the treachery of Jason. Her glance fell upon the engagement ring. She took Elsie’s hand. “How beautiful!” she exclaimed. “I love emeralds, and that is a magnificent one. And only a tiny flaw.”

Elsie coloured with annoyance. “I think you are mistaken,” she said. “It’s a perfect jewel.”

“Certainly it is perfect, dear,” replied Madame Almansa in her superior, informative tone. “Perfect for an emerald. But, you know, there are no emeralds of size anywhere in the world that haven’t flaws. At least, I never heard of one. Emeralds are valuable in spite of their flaws.”

Elsie coloured again, this time with annoyance at having exposed her ignorance.

“A superb setting,” continued Madame Almansa. “It must be very,

very old. I love that kind of setting—beautifully engraved, dull gold. The only objection is that it’s the best kind for deceiving one as to genuineness, isn’t it? One could not tell whether that stone was genuine or imitation. You know, they make such wonderful imitations. When I was going out in the world I had all my best jewels reproduced in imitation stuff, and usually I wore the imitation. One felt so much safer.”

Elsie drew her hand away, smiling sweetly. She was inwardly raging. “The cat!” she said to herself. “Clawing me viciously, and purring all the time.”

She left in a few minutes, Rontivogli calling for her. To relieve her feelings and also because she was in the habit of saying nearly everything that came into her head, she told him what Madame Almansa had said about the ring.

Rontivogli, half turned toward her as they sat side by side in her victoria, regarded her with his luminous smile. “That is the way of the world, *ma belle et bonne*,” he said in his gentlest manner. “It is difficult to harden one’s self to such wickedness. But there is also much that is beautiful and fine. And we—you and I—will shut everything else out of our lives, will we not?”

He made her feel unworthy, almost “common,” when he talked in that fashion—she realised that she was sadly lacking in “temperament,” and she dreaded that he might find her out.

“The ring,” he went on, “has been in the family for eight hundred years—perhaps longer. It is unchanged. No question of its genuineness has ever been raised, so far as I know. We are not so suspicious as some of you Americans.”

“She didn’t question its genuineness,” replied Elsie. “She simply wished to make me uncomfortable with a malicious insinuation. Or, may be, she was just talking. It was silly of me to tell you.”

He protested that he was not dis-



turbed. But he seemed unable long to keep off the subject, returning to it as the cleverest habitual liar will fatuously return to his unquestioned lie to weaken it by trying further to bolster it up. So persistent was he that he at last made her uneasy—not that she suspected him or was conscious of having been disturbed by his unnecessary reassurances. The next morning she went down to a jeweller's in Pennsylvania Avenue—she had other business there and thought it was her sole object in going, forgetting that she had intended to send her mother. She discussed several proposed purchases with the manager, whom she knew well. As she talked she had her elbows on a show case and her ungloved hands clasped so that the ring was in full view—curiously it was not on the engagement finger. He noted it, and thought she wished him to speak of it, because as she exhibited it she often glanced at it.

"Would you mind letting me look at that beautiful ring?" he asked.

"Certainly." She drew it off with a certain nervousness, gave it to him, and, as he looked, watched

him and it alternately with vague anxiety.

"A very old and a very quaint setting," he said, "and a fine——"

He paused; her mouth was dry and her skin hot.

"A fine stone—a beautiful stone," he continued. "One of the finest I ever saw. The flaw is slight."

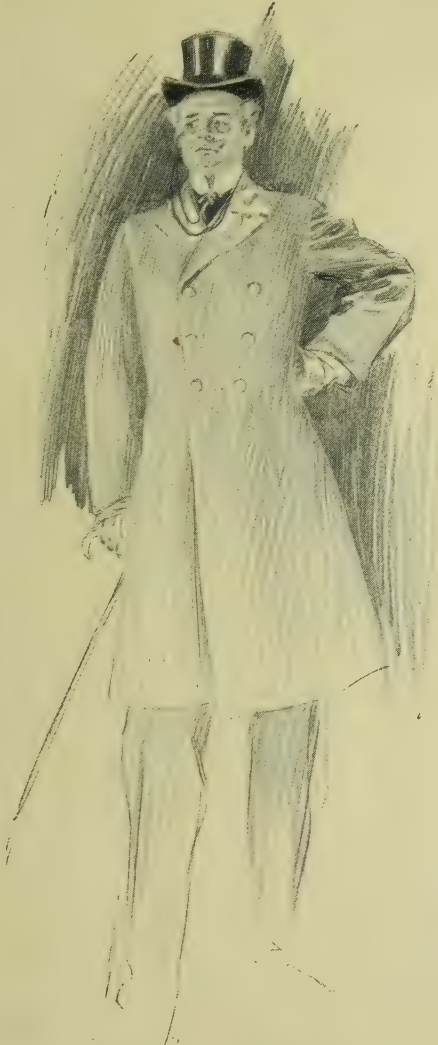
Elsie drew a long breath—she felt an unaccountable sense of relief. The manager took his glass, went to the window and studied the stone and the setting. "I'm glad to hear you say the stone's genuine," said she, now admitting to herself that Madame Almansa's poison had been lurking far down in her mind. "Someone doubted it, and as it was important to me to know, I intended to ask you."

"In that case," said the manager, "I feel it's my duty to tell you the stone's an imitation."

Elsie grew rigid and cold from amazement and rising horror.

"A good imitation," continued the manager, intent upon the stone, "but unquestionably not genuine. The setting makes it additionally deceptive."

"How much is the ring worth?"



COUNT ZITEL ZU BLICKENSTERN.

she asked, gathering herself together heroically.

"Well—the stone, of course, is worthless—a few dollars. But the setting is old and quite beautiful. It might bring a hundred or so from a collector if it hit his fancy and had an authentic history. If the stone were genuine, the ring would be worth about—five thousand, I should say, as a rough guess."

"Fortunately, I haven't bought it yet," she said carelessly. And she took it from him and put it—in her pocket-book. "The stone seems to have been undisturbed in that setting for a long time," she added as she closed the pocket-book.

"Oh, there's no telling as to that. It was manufactured by the newest process. It has been only two or three years, I believe, since they learned to put in the flaws so cleverly. They make them very well in New York now."

"Thank you so much, Mr. Macready," said Elsie. "You won't say anything about it, will you?"

"You needn't have asked that, Miss Pope," answered Macready with a reproachful smile.

"Thank you again," she said. It was not until she was driving away that her cheeks began to burn fiercely and the hot tears of shame and anger to scald her eyes.

#### XIV.

She went straight to her father with the whole story. He listened sitting at his desk, balancing a broad ivory paper-cutter on his forefinger. She felt much better when she had finished; her anger seemed to have been carried off in her words.

After a long silence her father said: "What do you wish to do?"

She looked foolish. "I don't know, papa," she said feebly. "What do you think we ought to do?"

"He may have been honestly deceived."

"But Mr. Macready said——"

"That was merely his off-hand opinion," he interrupted. "They've been making imitation jewels of all kinds for years. I know the Italians have long been clever at it."

Elsie was silent. She could not help remembering Rontivogli's stupid, over-crafty reiterations. She knew that he knew.

"And," continued her father, examining the paper-cutter critically, "there isn't the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of Prince Rontivogli himself."

Another long silence, during which neither father nor daughter showed the slightest curiosity as to what thoughts the other's face might be revealing.

"Even if he did wilfully deceive in this—not vitally important—matter," continued the aspirant for a princess daughter, "I can imagine many extenuating circumstances. It isn't the young man's fault that he's poor. It isn't unnatural that he shouldn't wish to expose his poverty—especially if he"—the Senator's face took on a smile of fatherly benevolence—"happened to care for the young lady. 'All's fair in love and war,' you know. And we must not judge harshly those who have less than we have. Still——"

Rontivogli's "temperament" was vigorously re-enforcing his title in repairing the havoc the false jewel had played with him in Elsie's mind. He had been a convincing lover; Elsie had too much vanity and too much desire to be loved madly not to be a credulous young woman. "I don't know what to do, papa," she said in the tone that proclaims a decision reached and a wish for support in it.

"Perhaps," replied the Senator slowly, the picture of forgiving charity, "it might be best to let the matter drop."

"But I simply can't wear the ring! I'd feel such a fraud, and I'd soon be disliking him, though this may not be at all his fault. Besides, some one might——"



"That could be easily arranged." Her father's eyes twinkled—he was preparing to treat the discovered deception as a little private joke on the prince between his daughter and himself. "We can get Tiffany to set an emerald in the ring. No one will know. And some day you can tease him about it. If he is innocent, it would mortify him horribly to learn the truth now, wouldn't it?"

Elsie smiled somewhat cheerfully. She was trying hard to make herself doubt the prince's guilty knowledge. "It must be done right away," she said.

She wore her gloves that afternoon. But Rontivogli, with nerves like a sensitive plant's leaves, felt a change in her, hard though she tried to seem unchanged. In the clear light of hindsight he had been cursing himself for saying so much to her of Madame Almansa's insinuations; and at first he feared that by his blundering he had roused suspicion in her. But she showed that she was still in the mood to marry him, and the negotiations for settlements went smoothly on between Senator Pope's lawyer and the attorney to the Italian Embassy, whom he had engaged to represent him; he dismissed his fear as a wild imagining of guilt and set himself to remove the coolness just under Elsie's surface of warmth by lavishing his "temperament" upon her. And he was rewarded with swift success. A flaw in such a lover was as inconsequential as a flaw in an emerald—and was it not as much a matter of course?

Toward the end of the week she went with her father to New York, and in two days Tiffany changed the setting for a consideration of some nine hundred and fifty pounds. — She returned to Washington fully restored—but she kept the false jewel. The shock and its after-effects were over now. She was a little astonished that she, so used to the quaint ways of foreigners, should have attached importance to the quaintness of this foreigner—a lover who was fiery and infatuated, a lover who sang, a lover

who was a Prince of a "house" that ruled and plotted and patronised the arts when Europe beyond the Alps was a savage wilderness. Rontivogli had not been studying women for twenty years—or ever since he was eighteen—aided by a classic face, a classic figure, a classic name and classic recklessness, without learning thoroughly the business he was now following.

As Frothingham sat alone in a corner of the club, staring with grim satire into the ugly face of his affairs, upon him intruded a man whom he had often described as the most viciously tiresome person he had ever met—Count Eitel zu Blickenstern. He disliked Blickenstern because he was a German; he avoided him because he was dull, because he was a chronic and ingenious borrower of small sums of money, and because every remark that seemed to him to have been intended humorously was hailed by him with a loud, mirthless laugh—the laugh of those who have no notion of wit or humour and fear their deformity will be discovered.

He had first met Blickenstern in the Riviera, where he was living on the last lees of tolerance. He would have cut him when he ran across him in New York had he not found him in high favour with the women who dominated fashionable society.

Frothingham's cold stare did not disturb Blickenstern, born insensible to mental temperatures. He posed for a moment to give Frothingham a chance to admire his fashionable array of new light grey frock suit, white spats, orchid in buttonhole, and dark red tie; then he dropped upon the lounge with the good-natured, slightly condescending greeting he gave men when he had money in his pockets. He explained that he had come the night before in a private car with a party of distinguished New Yorkers who had to testify before a Senate committee. "And, do you know," said he—his English was idiomatic American and almost without

accent—"the first person I ran into was that Italian scalawag, Rontivogli."

Frothingham's eyeglass glistened; otherwise he did not change expression.

"D' you know 'im?" he asked, languidly.

"Know 'im?" replied Blickenstern. "Rather! I'm responsible for him in this country. He landed without a friend, and the people he had letters to shut the door in his face. They don't fancy Italians in New York. I introduced him round, and got him in everywhere. And, by gad! he not only refused to pay a note he gave me, but when I met him here last night he stared at me as if he'd never seen me before."

"Rough, wasn't it?"

Blickenstern laughed cheerfully, without a trace of irritation. Insults did not disturb him. He had killed one man, and had wounded several in duels, but he fought only because it was the "proper thing for a gentleman"—and respect-inspiring in certain countries and in certain circumstances.

"I'm-off for home next week," he said, "never to return to this boulder-land. I think, just before I go, I'll get the face-value of that note and interest—and not in money, either."

Blickenstern had several drinks "on" Frothingham—half-a-dozen in as rapid succession as Frothingham could induce. But he refused to disclose his proposed revenge; only chuckled: "I'll bet the dago 'll leave on the first steamer after I sail."

Frothingham got Boughton to attempt Blickenstern, and Boughton not only tried it himself, but also put at work a friend of his in the German Embassy. Blickenstern, however, would not go beyond waggling his big blonde head and saying: "Wait! I don't want to spoil the fun." The military attaché at the German Embassy was with him when he met Rontivogli again. "I'll give the guinea one more chance," said he, overflowing with good nature, as always when he had drunk to excess.

It was the office of the Shoreham, and Rontivogli was on his way out. Blickenstern bore down upon him, and caught him by the lapel.

"I'm giving you your last chance, Cosimo," he said. "You'd better pay up."

"If you don't take your hands off me," exclaimed Rontivogli, in French, "I'll have you put into the street."

The look in his black eyes suggested the glitter of a stiletto.

Blickenstern shook him gently.

"If you don't pay that note," he replied, with unruffled good nature, "I'll publish it and the contract also. I'm leaving the country, and don't care what they think of me here. But you—I hear you're about to marry?"

Rontivogli grew yellow under the bronze of his clear, pale skin.

"I tell you, I can't pay the note. You know it. You drove me out of New York with your dogging and dunning me. In a few weeks I can pay, and will."

"Yes—when you're married." Blickenstern laughed loudly and not hollowly. Here was a joke he could see. "What do you think I am—an imbecile? Don't I know that as soon as you're married you can snap your fingers—and will?"

Rontivogli disengaged himself, and readjusted his close-fitting coat.

"I'm certain you will not make yourself liable to arrest for blackmail," he said, with calm contempt, and went on to his carriage.

Blickenstern looked after him, nodding and laughing.

"Just wait!" he said, addressing his fellow-German, and including the curious loungers in the office.

Frothingham searched for Blickenstern—he had a vague idea of taking him to call at the Popes. But he could not find him. He did see Rontivogli, however. One glance was enough to tell him that Blickenstern's threats had devoured his high spirits, and were



eating into his courage. He waited impatiently for the explosion—a five days' wait, for it did not come until the following Tuesday. That morning, as Hutt went out of his bedroom, after fixing his bath, Joe Wallingford called from their common sitting-room:—

"You're awake, aren't you?"

"Almost," answered Frothingham.

"Then just read that."

He flung a newspaper through the crack of Frothingham's door on to his bed.

Frothingham took the paper, and instantly caught the names of Rontivogli and Blickenstern in the largest headlines. He began eagerly upon a three-column article, the most of it under a New York date line.

"Ain't that cruel?" called Wallingford. "Ain't it a soaker?"

"Um!" replied Frothingham, too busy to pause.

It was an account of a suit brought by Blickenstern against Rontivogli to collect a note for twenty-five hundred dollars. The "sensation" lay in a document which Blickenstern had attached to the note and had filed with the papers in the suit—a contract, reading:—

"I, Cosimo di Rontivogli, hereby agree to pay Count Eitel zu Blickenstern twenty-five hundred dollars as soon as he has introduced me to the persons whose names are written upon the back of this contract in my handwriting. And I further agree to pay him an additional twenty-five hundred dollars within one month after I become engaged to an American lady, whether or not I am introduced to her by him. And I further agree to pay him an additional



"I HAVE COME, SIR, TO REPEL THE LIES OF THAT INFAMOUS PRUSSIAN."

ten thousand dollars within three months after my marriage with an American lady, whether or not he introduces me to her.

"(Signed) COSIMO DI RONTIVOGLI."

This contract, the newspaper said, was in Rontivogli's autograph, and was witnessed by two clerks at the Holland House; on the back of the contract, and also in Rontivogli's autograph, were the names of fifteen fashionable and rich New York women. Frothingham glanced at the names—he knew the bearers of most of them—and hastened on to Blickenstern's interview.

"In Europe," he had said to the reporter, "I should call the fellow out and kill him. Here, where the duel does not exist, I must take the only redress open to me for his betrayal of my friendship. I asked him to pay only the note. In fact, he owes me five thousand more, as he is now engaged to a Washington heiress. He is a black rascal. If you will send to Milan you can get a fine tale of how he happened to come to your country. I owe all my American

friends an apology for introducing him. I confess with shame that but for me he would have known no one."

The article went on with an account of Rontivogli's engagement to "Miss Elsie Pope, one of the best-known young women in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York Society, the only daughter of Senator John C. Pope, reputed to be the third richest man in the Millionaires' Club, as the Senate is called."

Then followed Rontivogli's sweeping denial, and his denunciation of the Prussian as a "blackmailer," a "notorious card-sharp," a "thorough scoundrel."

When Frothingham finished, he said: "Gad! what a facer for Miss Pope!"

"Isn't it, though?" replied Wallingford. "And for her father. I always blame the fathers."

"But I thought it was the mothers who hankered after European marriages?" said Frothingham.

"That's what is usually said," Wallingford answered, "because only the mothers appear in the public part of the business. But who gives up the money for the settlements? The women ain't a nose ahead of the men in the race of snobbishness. Poor little Elsie Pope! This ought to be a lesson to our girls against——"

He paused abruptly and reddened, though Frothingham could not see him. "I almost forgot that Frothingham's one of 'em," he said to himself.

Frothingham was grinning in the seclusion of his bedroom. "I should say so!" he exclaimed in his drawling, satirical voice. "Wonder what the Milan yarn is?"

He learned in a few hours, for the Washington afternoon papers had a long Associated Press dispatch from Milan. Rontivogli, heavily in debt and ruined, had been backed by a syndicate of his creditors for an American tour in search of an heiress. They had risked in the venture forty thousand lire, and,

within a month, an additional twenty thousand. They regarded it as a by no means desperate investment for the recovery of the very large sum which Rontivogli had got out of them before they discovered his financial plight—certainly with such a title and so much personal beauty and charm he could win the daughter of one of the multitude of rich men among those title-crazy American vulgarians. The Milan dispatch set forth that the correspondent had had no difficulty in getting the facts, as "every one here knows the story. The formation of such syndicates is said to be common in England, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy, and many of them have been successful."

"Poor Frothingham!" Wallingford thought as he read. "This is bad for his business. I fancy it'll be many a day before I see my thousand again."

And then he delicately gave Frothingham a hint that if he needed another thousand he could have it. But Frothingham didn't need it just then—and, it should be set down to his credit, he would have hesitated long before taking it, had he needed it. Wallingford was not wrong in thinking there had been, since he first knew Frothingham, a marked decline in his "honour as a gentleman," and a marked rise in his "honour as a man."

Rontivogli went to the Popes at eleven o'clock that morning. The look of the flunkey who opened the door foreshadowed to him his fate. He was shown not into the drawing-room, but into a reception-room—a small alcove to the left of the door, intended for wraps rather than for callers. The footman returned with a package on his tray. "Miss Pope is not at 'ome," he said, haughtily, omitting the customary "Your 'Ighness," and not even substituting so much as a "Sir" for it, "and she left this to be given to you."

Rontivogli ignored the impudences of omitting his title, and of addressing him as "you," and took the package. The





"ONE OF THE FINEST I EVER SAW. THE FLAW IS SLIGHT."

footman held aside the portière with the broadest possible hint in his face and manner.

"Tell Senator Pope that the Prince di Rontivogli wishes to see him," said Rontivogli, in a tone which at once reduced the footman, in spite of himself, from a human being to a mechanical device for the transmission of messages.

When he hesitatingly withdrew, Rontivogli opened the package—his ring, with the stone unset and loose in the box. He solved the puzzle almost as soon as it was presented to him. He scowled, then gave a short, sneering laugh, put the lid on the box, and thrust it into the tail pocket of his frock coat.

Senator Pope received him in his study, rising and bowing without advancing or extending his hand. He was serious, but bland—he did not know how to be brusque, or even unkind, in manner; he did know how to be diplomatic.

"I have come, sir, to repel the lies of that infamous Prussian," began Rontivogli with suppressed passion.

"You will, I trust, not distress me with the painful subject," said Pope, slowly and gently. "We know that the Count has maligned you. But you, as a gentleman, must appreciate how terrible the notoriety is to us all. I assume that you have come to relieve the young lady of the embarrassment of the situation."

Rontivogli lost control of himself, raved, paced the floor, pleaded, denounced, threatened even. But Pope, sympathetic and in the proper places tenderly sorrowful, pressed in upon the Prince his and Elsie's unchangeable determination. At last Rontivogli gave up the useless battle and drew the box from his pocket. "Your daughter," he said, "sent me by a servant this broken ring. The stone has been removed, and to my astonishment I find that a false emerald has been substituted." His voice and manner were apologetic, deprecatory, as if Senator Pope owed

him an explanation which he was loth to demand.

He opened the box and exhibited its contents to Pope, who looked with polite interest. "The stone has become detached," was all he said.

"But why was it not returned to me?" asked Rontivogli. "Why this false emerald in its place?"

"It is the same stone," said Pope. His tone was absent as if he were thinking of something else.

"It is not!" Rontivogli's voice was bold and hard, a covert threat in it.

They looked each the other straight in the eyes—Pope inquiringly, the Italian defiantly. Then Pope said: "Ah! Excuse me one moment."

He left the room, muttering as he reached the hall: "The miserable swindler! He knows we won't have any further scandal, no matter what it costs." When he returned he had in his hand the emerald he and Elsie had bought at Tiffany's. He laid it on the corner of the desk nearest Rontivogli.

"This is *a* genuine emerald," he said, his voice neither hot nor cold. "You may take *it*—if you like."

"I thank you," replied Rontivogli with a slight bow of acknowledgment, as if a wrong to him had been righted.

He put the emerald and the ring in his waistcoat pocket; he put the box, with the false emerald in it, on the corner of the desk exactly where Senator Pope had laid the genuine stone. Then he went on, in a way that was the perfection of courtesy: "May I presume further on your kindness? This German cur has placed me in a distressing position. I wish to leave America at once, to return where a gentleman cannot be thus attacked without defence. Unfortunately——" He hesitated with a fine affectation of delicacy.

Senator Pope's eyes were more disagreeable to look at than any human being had ever before seen them. "I shall be glad to give you any *reasonable*



assistance," he said with admirable self-control.

"You are most kind!" Rontivogli was almost effusive. "I shall return any advance you make as soon as I am at home."

"How much?" asked Pope, with a trace of impatience.

"I have many obligations which must be settled before I leave. I had just cabled for a remittance, but I wish to go before it can arrive. Might I trouble you for an advance of, perhaps, five thousand—I think that will be enough."

Senator Pope unlocked and opened a drawer, took out a flat package of bills. "Here is a thousand dollars," he said. "I cannot advance you more. And I trust you will sail the day after tomorrow." He looked hard at the Prince. "That will spare me the necessity of making a *private* appeal to the Italian Embassy through our State Department."

"You are most kind, mon chère Senator," replied Rontivogli.

He put the package of bills in the inside pocket of his coat. He reflected a few seconds, then took his top hat. "Will you do me the honour of presenting my compliments and regrets to Madame Pope—and to Mademoiselle?" he said, with steady eyes and elaborate politeness. "I thank you again. I regret that we part in circumstances so unhappy. I shall send your little advance within the month."

He bowed profoundly, and Senator Pope inclined his head. He went to the door, turned there, bowed again. "*Au revoir*, my dear Senator," he said, cordially, and was gone—a fascinating patrician figure of handsome ease and dignity.

## XV.

Frothingham let three days pass, and on the fourth called at Senator Pope's. Elsie was in Philadelphia—was visiting an aunt. It had not occurred to him

that she would run away and hide herself, so little did he think of the matter in any other light than that of a game between himself and Rontivogli. He was much upset and did not know what move to make next. Fate helped him the evening of the same day—the mail brought a note from Elsie:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—I can't help writing to thank you. You warned me, and you were good and kind about it, and I was very disagreeable. I should like to say so to you, but I don't suppose you'll be in Philadelphia, will you? And it will be many a day before I see Washington. Indeed, I hope I shall never see it again. I didn't deserve your friendship.

"E. W. P."

Frothingham had not reflected on this letter long before he was telling Hutt to get his belongings together. The next afternoon found him at the Bellevue in Philadelphia, and a few hours later he was dining at the Hopkinses' with Elsie and her uncle and aunt. He liked the Hopkinses—stiff and shy, but kindly. He liked the dark furniture and walls and woodwork, suggesting old English; liked the faces in the family portraits—English faces; liked surroundings where there was nothing new or new-fashioned except his own and Elsie's dress, where there was so much that was fine as well as old. And he had never liked Elsie so well as now that she was chastened into an appealing gentleness and humility.

He saw that he had been right in thinking her note an apology and an attempt to recall him. And when the Hopkinses left them alone in the parlour after dinner, he soon said: "I've come for an answer to that question I asked you."

She hung her head and flushed deeply. "Oh, I wish to get away from all this," she said, in a low voice. "I'll be glad to go far away—far as—as you care to take me."

He sat beside her and took her hand.

But he made no effort to show "temperament." "I'll go back to Washington and see your father to-morrow—if you wish," he said, after a silence.

"Yes," she replied.

She wrote a long letter to her father as soon as Frothingham was gone—her maid posted it at midnight. So it came to pass that Senator Pope was expecting him. He received him with the benign courtesy he gave to the humblest negro. He liked Frothingham—but, for that matter, it was impossible for him to dislike any member of the human race, even Rontivogli, or any well-disposed domestic animal; ever since he had "gathered his bunch," his content and complacency had, with a few brief pauses, been bubbling over in words and acts of kindness. But when Frothingham said, "I've come to see you, sir, about something of which I and your daughter have been talking," his face clouded with the same look as that with which he had received Rontivogli for the final interview.

Frothingham would not have attributed it to embarrassment had he known Senator Pope better. It was the look he wore whenever the exigencies of fate forced him to do anything unpleasant—whether to refuse a small favour or to cut a rival's throat or to scuttle a financial or political ship. For, being a good man and a lover of smoothness, it pained him exceedingly to cause his fellow-beings any other emotion but happiness. In the present instance the cause of his distress was the discovery that an alliance with nobility would destroy his chances of the Vice-Presidential nomination which he was plotting to get. He had not confided his ambition to his closest political lieutenant. But when Rontivogli was exposed and cast out, his colleague and "Boss" had said to him: "I'm glad to hear you are not going to take a foreign nobleman into your family, Senator. Until the engagement was announced we were hoping you

could be induced to make the race for the Vice-Presidency. While an Italian wouldn't have been as bad as an Englishman on account of the Irish vote, I don't think the people would have stood for even an Italian."

That settled any aristocratic ambitions.

"I've come, sir," Frothingham was saying, "to ask your consent to marrying your daughter."

Senator Pope's eyes swam, so strong was his emotion. "I am highly honoured, Lord Frothingham. But I cannot give you an answer in so important a matter at once. I must consult with her mother." Mrs. Pope was a shadowy nonentity, flitting nervously in the wake of father and daughter.

He detained Frothingham for a long talk on England and America, and sent him away in an almost jubilant mood—no applicant ever left him downcast. The next day Frothingham got a telegram from Elsie asking him to come to her as soon as he could. He assumed that her father had decided to convey his consent through her, and his spirits rose higher. But the first glimpse of her disturbed him—hers was not the face of a bearer of good news.

"I saw your father," he began.

"Yes," she interrupted; "he has written me."

"Does he consent?"

"Yes, and no." She hesitated. "He asked me not to tell, but I know I can trust you. He has been planning to be nominated for Vice-President. And he has found that he can't have the nomination if I marry a titled foreigner—especially an Englishman, because of the Irish. They say it will kill the ticket."

Frothingham retreated behind a vacant look.

"He found it out only a few days ago." She did not feel equal to telling him that her father had learned this fatal fact through the exposure of Rontivogli. "So," she ended, "we



couldn't marry until after the election. For he says he's sure of the nomination."

"And when is this election?"

"A year from next fall."

Fortunately, Frothingham had not the habit of letting his face speak for him. After a pause, he said: "But surely you can persuade him?"

"It's useless to try. You don't know him as I do. He seems yielding, but where he's set he's hard as granite."

"Nearly two years!" he repeated. And to himself: "Impossible! I might weather six months, but two years—the creditors would laugh at me!"

"And I wished to go away at once," she said, with a long sigh, looking at him mournfully.

"I—~~we~~—can't wait two years," he replied.

"We needn't, need we? We might ——" she began, then halted, blushing vividly.

He pretended not to understand—though he did, for he had already thought of that plan.

"You know—I'm of age," she went on, seeing that he was not going to help her out. "We—we needn't wait for his consent."

He did not change expression, but he was saying to himself: "Here's a mess! She's so mad to get away that she's ready to do anything."

"I think he'd forgive us," she went on. "But even if he didn't, I'd never regret."

He knew that he must say something—must say it quickly—and that it must be appreciative but non-committal. "I couldn't accept such a sacrifice," he said. "It wouldn't be decent to take advantage of you in that fashion. I know it sounds unromantic to say it, but, by Jove, I don't go in for the sort of romance that makes a fellow a black-guard." And he frankly told enough of his financial difficulties to make the situation clear to her. "I believe you can talk your father round," he ended. "He thinks the world of you."

Elsie smiled—melancholy and cynical. "Yes—so long as I don't interfere. But

I know how he feels about the Vice-Presidency. And that—that other affair has made him——" She shook her head.

This chilled Frothingham. "He'd never forgive her if she ran off with me and lost him the office," he reflected. "Besides, I can't afford to go in without settlements arranged beforehand. I must chuck it—quick as ever I can."

He urged persuading her father and she promised to try. He saw her the next day and the next, both afternoons and evenings. On the third day he did not see her until late in the afternoon—her father had come from Washington and had spent the morning with her. And while they were talking Frothingham was reading a letter from Honoria which had been languidly pursuing him for a week. Part of it was:—

"I think you met Cecilia Allerton in Boston. Had you heard of her bolting with Frank Mortimer?"

"Frank Mortimer!" he exclaimed, sitting bolt upright in bed in his astonishment. "That brute with the big teeth and empty head!"

"Her father was angry with her for something or other and treated her cruelly. Every one was pitying her. Frank fell in love with her out of sympathy, and she was so miserable that, when her father wouldn't consent, she ran off with him. Mr. Allerton has changed his will, they say, leaving everything to colleges and charities. But Frank has an income and will have more when his uncle dies, and she has a rich aunt who loathes her father, and so may leave her something."

"Cecilia's quite mad about Frank, now that they're married. Willie Kennefick was dining with us last night. He says she was in love with Stanley Huddiford, who died a year or so ago. He says she believes Stanley's soul has entered into Frank! She's a clever girl, they say, but a bit eccentric, like so many of them down Boston way——"

Frothingham looked on this news as a direct warning to him. "I'll take no risks with Pope," he said. "It would be sheer madness."

And before he left his rooms he wrote to Barney, fixing the next day but one for his arrival at Chicago. He felt that there was no hope of winning Pope—at least not at present. "If she by chance succeeds after I'm gone—and I'll leave her in a good humour—I can easily return. But I know there's nothing in it."

Failure was mourning in her eyes when he called at five o'clock. They went for a walk, and in reluctant words she told him that her father was immovable, that their only choice was between disobeying him and breaking the engagement. She listened coldly while he explained his position again; when he had finished she sneered. "You are—unanswerable," she said, bitterly.

"No doubt I do lack 'temperament,'" he drawled, an ironic gleam on his eyeglass.

She was humble at once.

"Oh—I understand," she answered.

But she was too heartsick to talk; and he forgot that he was walking with her—could only feel ruin's arm linked

firmly in his. It was dusk when they reached the house.

In the doorway he took her hand and held it.

"I shall see you when I return?" he asked. "Will you answer if I write, now and then?"

"Yes," she replied, gratefully.

She sent away the servant who came at her ring. She detained Frothingham, hoping against reason and instinct that he would tear off that tranquil mask of his, would forget his responsibilities as the bearer of a proud and ancient name, and would say: "I care only for you. Come!" Even after he had left her she lingered, holding the door ajar, listening for returning footsteps. At last she shut the door and went forlornly and wearily to her great, lonely, sombre dressing-room. She stood before the mirror of her dressing-table, studying her plain, wistful, woe-ful little face. "You aren't pretty," she said to it, "and one can't expect much when men think of nothing but looks in a woman." She could no longer see herself for tears. "And I believe he'd have been—at least kind to me."

She rang for her maid, and began listlessly and mechanically to dress for dinner.

*(To be continued.)*



## WEE MACGREGOR

### "ARMS AND THE BOY"

By J. J. B.

*Illustrated by Angusine Macgregor*

"**B**UT it wis rale kind o' Mistress Purdie to mind Macgregor's birthday," said Mrs. Robinson to her husband, who was critically examining a rather gaudily-covered little book entitled, "Patient Peter: or, The Drunkard's Son."

"Ay; it wis rale kind o' her," replied John, slowly and without much enthusiasm.

"Efter a'," she continued, endeavouring to do justice to her sister-in-law, whom she really disliked, "it's no' the present itsel' we've got to think o', but the speerit."

"Dod, but ye're richt there, wumman! There's nae want o' speerit aboot this book," he interrupted with a dry laugh. "'Patient Peter: or, the Drunkard's Son!'" That's a bonny like book to gi'e til a wean!"

"Whisht, man!" said Lizzie, checking a smile. "Ye ken fine whit I meant. An' ye're no' to let on to Macgregor ye dinna like it. Him an' wee Jeannie'll be in the noo."

"Dis Macgregor like it hissel'?"

"Weel, I daursay he wud ha'e liket somethin' else, John. He wantit to gi'e it till wee Joseph, the puir laddie that's been lyin' badly sic a lang while; but, of coorse, I wudna let him."

"Wee Joseph wudna be muckle the better o' this book, I'm thinkin'. But it wis unco' nice o' Macgregor to think o' his puir wee freen. I'll ha'e to gi'e him an extra bawbee fur that."

"Na, na, John!" cried Lizzie.

"Whit fur no', dearie? I tell ye, I like when the wean thinks o' ither weans. Ay; an' fine ye like it yersel'!"

"Ah, but ye see——"

"Aw, I ken ye think he audna be rewardit fur bein' kind. But I'm shair he wudna expec' any reward."

"Maybe no'. But——"

"But, a' the same, I like to encourage him."

"Ay; that's a' richt, but——"

Lizzie's remonstrance was here interrupted by the return of her son and daughter.

"Did ma doo like bein' ootbye wi' her big brither?" she cried, affectionately.

"Ay, Maw, she likes it," replied Macgregor, who, occasionally, was good enough to oblige his mother by taking the toddling Jeannie for a short walk up and down the street. "But she gangs awfu' slow," he added, as he relinquished the small fingers, "an' she's aye tumlin'."

"She'll shin be rinnin' races wi' ye, Macgregor," said his father, pleasantly.

"Deed, ay!" said his mother. "Ye'll shin be rinnin' races wi' Greegy—eh, ma daurlin'?"

"Lassies canna rin fast," returned the boy. "Their legs is ower wake."

"I hope ye didna let yer sister fa'," his mother interposed, as she brushed a little dust from the child's lower garment.

"I canna help her coupin' whiles, Maw," said Macgregor, easily. "But I aye keep a grup o' her haun, an' I never let her fa' furrin'—jist backwards; an' she jist sits doon, an' disna hurt hersel' ava'."

"No' hurtit," observed the mite, gravely.

"There, ye see!" said her brother, triumphantly.



"SHE JIST SITS DOON, AN' DISNA HURT HERSEL' AVA."

"I'm shair he aye tak's guid care o' wee Jeannie," put in John, appealing to his wife.

"I'm shair I never said he didna," rejoined Lizzie, patting her boy's shoulder.

John's face assumed an expression of complete satisfaction. "Here, Macgregor! Come ower here till I speak to ye," he cried, in a pleased voice.

Macgregor obeyed willingly, while his father fumbled in a pocket.

"John," whispered Lizzie, warningly.

But John smiled merrily back to her, and then turned to his son. "I wis gaun to gi'e ye a bawbee, Macgregor, but I ha'ena yin, so here a penny instead."

"Oh, John!" murmured his wife.

"Thenk ye, Paw," said Macgregor, grinning.

"D'ye ken whit it's fur, ma mannies?"

"Naw," replied Macgregor, who had already received a bright shilling as a birthday offering from his parent. (The bright shilling, however, had been promptly taken by his mother, much to his own disgust, to the savings bank, along with a half-crown received from Grandfather Purdie.)

"Aweel, it's fur thinkin' o' gi'ein' yer book to puir wee Joseph," said John, stroking the back of the boy's head.

"I wud like fine to gi'e it to Joseph, Paw. Maw said I wisna," said Macgregor, with a glance at his mother, whose attention was apparently entirely taken up by her daughter.

"Yer Maw thinks it's no jist the thing to gi'e awa' a present," John explained; adding, "an' I daresay she's richt."

"Whit wey, Paw?"

"Weel, ye see, whit wud ye dae if yer Aunt Purdie cam' to the hoose an' speirt if ye liket the book, an' if ye

wis keepin' it nice an' clean? Yer Maw'll ha'e to pit a cover on it fur ye. Eh, Lizzie?"

"Ay, I'll dae that," his wife answered pleasantly. She felt that, on the whole, her man was behaving really discreetly.

"But I'm no' heedin' aboot the book, Paw, an' wee Joseph likes readin'," said Macgregor. "An' it's a daft story onywey."

"Hoo can ye say that, Macgregor, when ye've never read it?" his mother inquired.

"I've read some o' it. There's naeboddy gets kilt in it. I like stories about folk gettin' their heids cut off or stabbit through an' through wi' swords an' spears. An' there's nae wild beasts. I like stories about black men gettin' ett up, an' white men killin' lions an' teagurs an' bears an'——"

"Whisht, whisht, laddie," cried Lizzie.

"Aw, the wean's fine," said John, smiling. "Dod, I doot I like thur kin' o' stories best masel'."

"But I'm no' heedin' aboot this book," Macgregor went on, regarding the volume with some contempt. "It's jist about a laddie ca'ed Peter, an' his Maw's deid, an' his Paw's an' awfu' bad



man, an' he's aye strikin' Peter an' gi'ein' him crusts to eat, an' Peter jist eats the crusts an' asks a blessin' furbye, an' in the end he gangs ootbye when it's snawin' to luk fur his Paw, an' gets drookit, an' gets the cauld in his kist, an' dees, an' his Paw gets rin ower wi' a lorrie, an' dees, tae; but Peter gets taken up to the guid place, and his Paw gets taken down to the——"

"Whisht, Macgreggor," cried his mother again. "Ye're not to——"

"It's in the book, Maw."

"Weel, weel, dearie, it's a sad story that. But ye wud be gey sair vexed fur puir Peter deein'."

"Naw, I wisna."

"Aw, Macgreggor!" said Lizzie, reproachfully, while her husband barely checked a guffaw.

"Well, it's no' a true story, Maw."

"Hoo dae ye ken that?"

"I ken it fine."

"But mony a laddie's got nae Maw—puir thing!—an' a bad Paw, an' has to eat crusts."

"Ay; but they dinna ask a blessin' fur the crusts."

John jumped up and went to the window, where he stood with his hands to his mouth and his shoulders heaving.

"I'm vexed to hear ye speakin' like that, Macgreggor," said his mother sternly.



"MAW SAID I WISNA," SAID MACGREGGOR."

"Whit wey, Maw?"

"Because ye sudna mak' a mock o' sic things. An' maybe the laddie in the book wis gled to get the crusts."

"But it's a' lees about him. I dinna believe a word."

"Haud yer tongue, Macgreggor! That's no' the way to speak aboot the present yer Aunt Purdie sent ye."

"But I wud rayther ha'e gotten a pistol fur firin' peas."

"Mercy me! I'm thankfur ye didna get *that*! Ye wud shin ha'e us a' blin'."

"I wudna fire it at ony o' you yins," he graciously returned, with a glance at his relatives.

"Na, na," said Lizzie, not unkindly. "That's no' the kin' o' toy fur a laddie. An' onyway, there's nae use wishin' fur whit ye canna get, dear'e. Yer paw

## THE IDLER

wudna like ye to ha'e ony kin' o' fire-arms about ye, wud ye, John?"

John pretended not to hear.

"He micht pit oot wee Jeannie's e'en in mistak'," she continued. "Every day ye read i' the papers o'——"

"I *wudna*!" exclaimed Macgregor, indignantly. "Wud I, Jeannie?" he cried, appealing to his little sister.

"Ay," cheerfully assented the cherub, who had been too busy playing with some blocks of wood on the floor to pay any attention to the conversation of her elders.

"Ach! she disna ken whit she's sayin'!" exclaimed the boy, in disgust.

"There's mony a true word spoken in eegnorange, as Solymon says," observed Lizzie, sagely.

"I wisht I had a pistol," he muttered, as if he had not heard her.

"Well, laddie, I've tell't ye ye canna get a pistol. Whaur wud ye get the money to buy it, eh?"

"It wud jist cost thruppence, an' I cud get the money oot the bank."

"Na, na. The money maun bide in the bank, Macgregor."

"I dinna like ma money bidin' in the bank, Maw."

"Ye'll like it some day. John, come over here an' tell Macgregor a story."

John left the window, but his son put on his bonnet and moved to the door.

"Whaur are ye gaun, Macgregor?" inquired Lizzie.

"Ootbye."

"Ay; but I want to ken whaur ye're gaun."

"To see wee Joseph."

"Aw, that's a guid laddie!" said Lizzie, and John beamed approval. "But ye're no' to bide lang. An' when ye come back I'm gaun to write to yer Aunt Purdie to tell her ye like yer book."

"But I dinna like it, Maw."

Lizzie was going to speak, but John, with a laugh he could not restrain, interposed, saying: "Weel, weel, we'll see about the letter when Macgregor comes back."

Macgregor returned to the table, and picked up "Patient Peter."

"Can I gi'e wee Joseph the *len*' o' ma book?" he inquired.

"Dod, ay!" said John, delighted.

"Deed, ay!" said Lizzie, also pleased. "But bide a wee, an' I'll pit a cover on it."

She opened a drawer in the dresser, wherein she methodically placed odds and ends, and drew forth a sheet of tough brown paper, in which she encased the covers of "Patient Peter."

"That'll keep it clean," she said. "Tell wee Joseph to pit a bit paper at the place, an' no' to turn doon the pages."

"Aw, Maw," said Macgregor, and departed.

When he had been gone a couple of minutes John turned to his wife, and said diffidently: "It's a peety the wean's disappointit wi' the book."

"It is that," said Lizzie. "But it wudna dae to let him get everythin' he wants."

"But it's his birthday, woman. I—I wud like fine to gi'e him a pistol."

"Weel, I never!"

"The pistol he wants isna dangerous, Lizzie."

"I'm no' shair o' that!"

"It's just like a pope-gun, ye ken."

"Is't?"

"Ay. It wudna hurt a flee."

"Flees is no' that easy hit."

John laughed heartily. "Dod, but ye had me there! But wud ye no' let me buy the wean a pistol? I'll see he disna dae ony hairm. 'Deed, I mind fine when I wis a wean, I aye wantit a gun or a pistol."

"I dinna think it wud be wice to gi'e yin to Macgregor. Ye never ken whit he'll dae."

"Hoots, toots! Say the word, an' I'll rin an' buy him yin, Lizzie. Thon book wisna the thing to gi'e a wean ava'."

"Ye sudna say that, John. But, a' the same, I dinna think it wis a vera



nice book. Nae doot Mistress Purdie meant weel," she added, grudgingly. "Weel, John, if ye'll promise no' to let him be reckless, I'll say nae mair aboot it. Awa' an' buy the pistol!"

And John went without delay.

As he ascended the stairs on his return in the dusk, John heard a click and something stung his cheek. This was followed by a badly stifled crackle of laughter which he recognised.

"Macgregor!" he exclaimed.

For a moment there was dead silence; then someone descended the flight of stairs above him.

"I thocht ye wis a brigand, Paw," said his son. "I didna hit ye, did I?"

"Ay, ye hit me!"

"Aw, Paw!" The regret in the boy's voice was slightly intense. "Whaur did I hit ye?"

John put a finger to his cheek.

"I wis aimin' at yer hert," said Macgregor. "I'm glad I missed."

John wondered what he should say.

"I—I didna mean to hurt ye, Paw," murmured his son. "I—I didna mean it."

"But whit did ye hit me wi'? Dod, it wis gey nippy!"

"It wis a pea, Paw."

"Ha'e ye gotten a pistol?"

"Ay. It's wee Joseph's. He wis gaun to gi'e me it fur the book; but noo, I jist got the len' o't. I'm vexed I hurtit ye."

"Weel, weel, we'll say nae mair aboot that, Macgregor, but ye mauna fire at folk like thon again. Mind that, or ye'll maybe get the nick."

"I'll never dae't again, Paw."

"A'richt, ma mannie. But ye best rin ower to wee Joseph an' gi'e him back his pistol."

"But he'll no' ha'e read the book yet," objected Macgregor.

"Never heed. Let him keep the book till he's read it; but gi'e him back his pistol."

John spoke firmly, and Macgregor felt that he must obey.

"I'll gang up to the hoose," said his father, who had great difficulty in keeping his secret.

Ten minutes later, Macgregor, having dutifully accomplished his

errand, reached home to find his father firing peas at a mustard tin on the mantel-piece, and his mother applauding or commiserating the sportsman.

John immediately placed the weapon in the boy's hands. "There, ma mannie," he said, "there's a pistol fur ye."



"I THOCHT YE WAS A BRIGAND, PAW."

## THE IDLER

Macgregor looked at his mother.

She nodded. "Be awfu' carefu' noo, dearie," she said.

Somehow the youngster was touched. "I'm no' heedin' about it, Maw! I'm

no' awfu' heedin' about it!" he cried, and ran to her arms.

Later on he pointed out that it wasn't quite such a good one as wee Joseph's.



Augustus Macgregor  
1903

"BE AWFU' CAREFU' NOO, DEARIE."





## THE STORY OF A MUSICIAN

By FRANCES IRWIN

*Illustrations by Louise B. Mansfield*

"IT is long since I have indulged in such frivolity," objected Marot; "my age and my professional standing demand a certain dignity of conduct——"

"Nonsense!" said Léry, his old pupil, slipping an arm through his. "An artist like yourself may do as he pleases, and let lesser musicians howl as they will. This is not a waste of time. You are diverted, you are giving me pleasure, and then there are voices worth hearing within this 'cage of screech owls,' as you call it; and dancing—Ciel!"

With a protesting laugh and a shrug, Marot—composer, musician, master of vocal training, and erstwhile opera-

singer—allowed himself to be gently guided through the doorway of the Café Chantant, in which Léry found places at a small table well in the rear.

"You are as unmanageable as ever, and as full of whims," Marot remarked, and leaned back to view the dance just ending with an indulgent smile.

He talked without cessation through the next chanson populaire, with one hand on the shoulder of Léry, who listened, and gazed at him affectionately. They forgot time and place in their reminiscences, in their interested eager exchange of opinions, which had diverged widely since their last meeting, until a sudden hush in the room, and a few

*piano* notes from a voice of melting sweetness startled them to silence. It was a simple and touching ballad sung by a woman whom L ry could not have pronounced either plain or beautiful, so simple was her dress, so modest her lowered eyes, so quiet yet full of tremulous strength the easy legato of her style.

"A voice!" exclaimed Marot, leaning forward with his hand on the other man's knee. "A rare voice! It has great qualities!" he exclaimed, with enthusiasm as the ballad ended. "I must speak to the director—I must find her out——"

But he stopped again, as the singer trilled forth into a gay, popular song. The quaint simple maiden vanished; coming to the front of the stage, she let her hearers know the full charm of her long-lashed and laughing grey eyes. She took dancing steps and pirouetted with her head thrown back—all gay witchery and diablerie, while Marot and L ry looked at each other with wondering smiles.

"Deceived again! I thought her an angel!" said L ry.

Marot waited for her encore; then, as she laughed and ran out for the second time, the grey-haired apostle of music rose.

"Wait for me here, my dear L ry. I must see the singer—I must know that voice!"

That voice—to him an individuality, a wondrous creation of unlimited possibilities. Already his trained ear had marked its depths, its weaknesses, its rare characteristics, and the jealous mastership that was in him claimed a new-found treasure. The perfecting and developing of it lay in his power, and presented itself as a duty.

In the bare room adjoining the stage, to which his card won him admission, Marot found her, the object of the attentions of a tall, greasy-haired boulevardier, to whom she showed scant favour.

"My child," he said, touching her arm

gently, "perhaps you have heard of me I am Marot, known for many years in opera, and I now train singers for the stage. I wish to talk to you——"

The obnoxious flatterer fell back, and the two were soon in earnest conversation.

"To leave this engagement? But the money is what keeps me alive—I have no other way of earning anything, and I am not yet reduced——" She glanced contemptuously around on the groups of men and women in the room.

"Have you been singing here long?"

"My father was violinist here, and the director heard my voice one day, when he came by chance to our lodging. He begged me to come, but Jean always refused. Now—he is dead—and I had no choice. I have been here for a few months; the director is kind, and has taught me many things. But, last week, he tried to force me to sing a favourite air of poor Jean's! I could have killed him! He will not ask again."

"But you are being wasted—thrown away here. Besides, you are too young—it is not a fit place for you."

"It is not so bad as they picture it," she said, flushing a little angrily. "I have some good friends, and as for the rest, if one is not a fool——"

"I have found her just in time," thought Marot. "Another half year, and she would have clung to this life."

Two Frenchmen, tall and well-dressed, came in, and stood as if waiting to speak to the singer, greeting her with excessive gallantry as she came towards them. She chatted gaily for a while, and returned to Marot at last with a little air of triumph, as if she had given him proof of her last assertion.

"My song comes in a few minutes, and then I am leaving," she began. "You are very kind, monsieur, but——"

"It will take me only a few minutes to say what I wish. I propose that you give up this engagement, and put yourself under my instruction, which I give gladly in the interest of Art. I have



absolute faith in your voice; it has a great scope, and very unusual qualities. You have not misused it much as yet; if you stay here you are in a fair way to do so; and in two years it will be rough and incapable of development. I have noted your faults of method. On the other hand, three years—I name a safe figure—of proper instruction will transform you into a dramatic singer welcome on any stage."

She stood before him in her demure plain grey gown that suggested the simplicity of her first ballad, a white kerchief crossed over her breast, and leaving her throat bare; her thick black hair parted and drawn over her ears into a low knot at the back; her figure slight and yet rounded, and full of the quick grace of the Frenchwoman.

"I can't believe you," she said. "I have not much faith in generosity. You offer a great deal, and of course I might disappoint you."

"The future offers you a great deal. Nature has already given you much, and you do not value it. Such a voice as yours will be one day is rare on the operatic stage."

She continued to look at him incredulously.

"My child, I am old enough to be your father. I know this world, with its good and evil—I know the world of Paris. Are you, with your glorious gift, going to throw yourself before these good-for-naughts, who are as eager as vultures for every new victim? Let me show you another and larger world—a world worth conquering. Let me show you how to conquer it with your voice. Then choose, when the best of everything lies before you."

She looked at his kind, earnest face, the eyes so full of true interest and friendliness, the grey hair bristling erect on his head, in the fashion her father, too, had affected. For some reason tears sprang to her eyes.

"I would have no means of support——" she faltered.

"That could be all arranged. I am not a poor man, nor helpless yet, if I *am* getting old." He took both her hands and held them with a sort of benign tenderness. "You have it in you—the courage and the artistic feeling," he whispered, not to be overheard by the two waiting *élégants*. "I will see the director, and to-morrow will come to see you where you are living. By then you will have had time to think it all over. You can return with me to my studio, so that I can try your voice, and then—we will come to a conclusion."

They parted as the "*demoiselle grise*" was called for her final song, and by the time Marot returned to his place she had vanished again.

"What success?" said Léry, who was applauding enthusiastically.

"She is reluctant to think of serious study. Perhaps at some future day she will come to me. She is—a little disappointing when one talks to her——" he halted. He could not tell me what instinct made him hide the truth from Léry. Marot was diplomatic, but not too good at prevarication.

"You are deceiving me," laughed the other. "You don't want me to see the girl. I vow she is charming, and I am going to have a word with her." Marot shrugged his shoulders and let him go, knowing that by this time "*La Grise*" was well on her way up the bright boulevard. Léry came back annoyed, and declaring to the imperturbable Marot that he would certainly find her on the following evening.

"You have deteriorated," said Marot, "since you became a sculptor. Had you remained under my influence you would have been a hard worker, a prudent liver—more serious, and with more conscience——"

"And with a horrible voice," added Léry. "My dear old master, I love and revere you more than any man living; I will not tease you any more, for I remember that you were always head-

strong when your protégés were concerned."

Marot did not reply. They went out, on the whole, a little cold, and not quite sure of each other.

Léry could not carry out his plan for the next evening, and when he returned to the café ten days later "*la demoiselle grise*" had almost been forgotten in the charms of a stout contralto who wore poppies and gave embellished imitations of "*Carmen*."

"You are a fool, as usual," said Marot's wife, when he confided his project. "You will be imposed upon: the girl, of course, is tricky and not at all as grateful as she appears. She will use you in some way."

"One cannot be 'imposed upon' by a voice. It is there—it declares itself—it cries to me to liberate it. As to the girl's character, I can find nothing evil in it. The director—who demands less for her release than I expected—the people she had been lodging with, spoke well of her. Ciel! what a miserable lodging! This may be the saving of her—at any rate I willingly take the risk. She cannot make off with any of my theories for at least two years, and if she gets tired and leaves me, Art and the Public will be the chief losers."

"You are a good man, but you are crazed by your profession. I wash my hands of your doings. Come, where is that music you wanted copied?" So the two lived, arguing, and adoring each other.

A knot of foreigners, all pupils of Marot, were wintering in Tours, and he found it to his advantage to spend two days there out of every week. A happy idea had come to him. An old servant of his was settled there, and he made arrangements with her for a lodging for "*La Grise*." He was triumphant at getting the girl out of Paris. He broached the topic gingerly, fearing after all that she might rebel, and pine of loneliness in a small town, devoid of the sparkle and life she knew. But when he spoke

of old Marthe and the comfortable lodgings he had provided for her, of the kind people he knew in Tours, of the inducements to study, and of his regular visits, the girl began to weep.

"My dear—my dear—friend——" she faltered, "how can I thank you? I am really so tired of all this here, and it is often hideous to be alone. Poor Jean's death—if something had not happened soon, I think I should have jumped into the Seine." Her tragic air was not affected, and he had never before seen her so moved.

In the train, during their journey of a few hours, she put her hand timidly over his arm, and said in a lone tone:—

"I shall work! Oh, how I shall work!"

"My judgment is not always so faulty," thought Marot; "but I will be cautious, and I will not expect too much."

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Marot, with his kind, understanding eyes that gazed long at her, and grew tearful at her clinging to him, had gone at last, leaving her in the quaint, four-roomed lodging with the good old peasant woman. Overcome suddenly with her old grief and loneliness, as well as by the wonderful kindness that had been showered upon her, Gabrielle threw herself on the bed and cried herself to sleep. When she woke it was late afternoon. She pushed open the shutter and disclosed to view a tiny dark street, the houses crowding against the protecting mass of the great cathedral. Quite a distance to the left one flying buttress seemed to have alighted between two ancient houses that leaned and toppled on it lovingly. One boasted a tiny corner tower with a pointed cap of grey slates. The windows of this house had gently subsided from the severity of their original angles, and were moreover placed at irregular heights and spaces, as if the builder had been pre-occupied and knocked one here and there as the



thought occurred to him. The entrance door boasted an archway whose fretted stonework had grown soft and warm and indistinct of pattern, like used and ancient lace. Over all this ravishment of age the cathedral threw its vast impenetrable shadow.

A little farther on, where a wrought-iron lamp thrust itself out from the corner house, a flight of roughly paved steps descended by turns and angles to the lower town, whose roofs were just visible through a narrow opening among the houses. The street, which encircled the cathedral, was only visited at rare intervals by strangers, who forgot all else in the glories of the interior. It opened out on a quiet square behind the apse, warm and sun-flooded, delighting the eager Gabrielle's eyes. The corner house was the most noticeable on the square. It had a sculptured doorway and two broad windows above, with plain stone arches, divided by stone bars in the centre. These windows were nearly always open, and thin scarlet curtains blew in and out. Such was the angle of the square that this house commanded a view down the Rue des Clôîtres, and formed a gay focus for the eyes of its inhabitants, dwelling in the cathedral's shade.

The gargoyles on the cathedral roof were not far above the level of Gabrielle's window, and kept there an eternal watch, with the moss grown green in their grooves where the rain had left small pools. The great sloping roof soared away above them—the double rows of buttresses thrust outward like the serried ranks of oars in an old-time galley. One gargoyle had the head of a frog, another that of a strange griffin, which clung with all four feet to the stone as he surveyed the street below. The third, nearest the window, pulled his right ear forward with one paw, and with the other clutched his wide-open mouth, while his eyes bulged with expectation.

"What is he listening for?" thought

Gabrielle. "Why, waiting to hear me sing, of course!—and he has been waiting who knows how many years?"

She was delighted with the humour of the idea, and felt a sense of companionship with these strange creatures. For very joy she trilled forth a few notes, sending them up to break and shiver and soar to silence over the vast roof. "You shall soon know what I can do, *gargouille*!" she said gaily.

Once more she leaned out and looked, first to the left with its glimpse of the square and the gay-curtained window, its vista of roofs where the paved steps descended; then to the right where the light was less and the houses followed a tortuous line around the buttresses, and where along the rough cobblestones came good old Marthe with her basket of vegetables and frugal provisions for the evening meal.

The sunlight as it touched the gargoyles fell for a short time each day in Gabrielle's room. She welcomed it and reckoned the noon hour by it. The days were crowded so full that she had little time to mope or dream. She was thrilling still at the sudden change in her fortunes, absorbed in Marot's instructions and tasks. She must read—she must memorise verses for him—become familiar with the wonderful stories of the operas she would study later. She must follow all his rules strictly—sing for so long, no longer, each day. Sometimes she walked out with Marthe; every day, often more than once, she went into the cathedral and said her prayers in a quiet corner. At these hours poor Jean was uppermost in her thoughts.

Then came the weekly visits of Marot, and her walk to his studio, where she spent the morning and often the entire day, listening to his pupils from a hidden corner, and profiting by the criticism that Marot flung at them mercilessly. She begged him not to present her to any of these students—many were foreigners, all were well-dressed, gay,

intimate with one another. From the window-seat she watched them as though they were before her on a stage, and thought how their bravado and airs would vanish before a critical Paris audience—above all, such audiences as those to which she had sung!—who demanded the best thing of its kind, though the “kind” differed in standard from the fashionable theatres.

“I can hide you for a time,” said Marot, “but not for long, especially if anyone chances to hear your voice. No one must hear it for a long time yet—that is my express wish.”

The evenings with Marot she liked best of all, and exulted in the thought that none of his other pupils saw him as she did—communicative, reminiscent and almost childish in his readiness for any small diversion. They went to the theatre, or listened to the music in the square, or sat in Marot’s studio, she on a low bench listening to his tales of opera days and triumphs. Marot was astonished to witness the quickening of her intelligence, and the hold his ideas seemed to have over her. He had never moulded so pliable a nature—he attributed her impressionability to her recent grief, and to the intense and reverent gratitude she felt to him.

“Are you lonely?—do you miss Paris?” he said one night.

She coloured faintly. “Sometimes.”

“It is natural. You shall return there with me for a few days whenever you like. Madame Marot will receive you gladly, or, if you wish, you can return to your old lodging.” He awaited her answer curiously.

“Oh, no—oh, no! I am glad, now, that you brought me away from Paris. Here all is fresh and new, there is nothing dreadful to remember; but there I think of how poor Jean died—gasping for breath. And then, I am not ‘La Grise’ any more. I am really different, cher maître!”

What he had aroused was ambition, and the love for her work. His wife

ceased to deplore his infatuation, as he gave her occasional accounts of the girl’s progress. Old Marthe had grown fondly attached to her.

But there came a week when Marot was detained by illness in Paris. The days seemed endless, and Gabrielle realised for the first time how all her week had merged to his visits, and how truly lonely was her life otherwise. She stood near her window and sang the studies that suddenly seemed so difficult, and the gargoyle leaned mockingly above to listen, dragging his ear forward with one grotesque paw. The afternoon was dark, and threatening rain. She felt overwhelmed with a sudden horrible sadness. Her voice broke, and she hid her face in her arms. It was Marot, her kind old master, alone, who gave her courage. How many years of work and loneliness like this would realise his aim for her? And meanwhile, who cared whether she laughed or wept? Even Marot himself was more disturbed at the roughness of her voice than for its cause when she had spent hours of the night in tears over sad memories. Would she go back to Paris, to the gaiety and excitement of the old life? In her heart she knew that “la demoiselle grise” had almost forgotten how to trill and pirouette as of old before an enthusiastic audience—even though the “new voice” that Marot was slowly liberating should send the poor director into paroxysms of envy.

Work—patience—new words, and hard to learn; and they could not fill one’s life! She leaned out of the window, and looked mechanically toward the square for the fluttering crimson curtains that always made such a gay, delicious spot of colour on dull days. But the windows with their arches and dividing-stone bars were shut—and the gargoyle grinned derisively.

“Bête! Horreur!” said Gabrielle to him—and shut her window with a crash.

She flung on a wrap and went out to



say her prayers at the cathedral, as a relief to loneliness rather than in any spirit of devotion.

The place was almost deserted. The verger was cleaning the great pillars with a bunch of leaves set on a long pole; the dust of ages came drifting down. He paused in his work and waited for Gabrielle's daily greeting.

"How dark and dismal it is," said the girl. "Everything is so cold and gloomy that I am almost afraid to go over to that chapel to say my prayers."

"There are flowers there, and the lamps are lit," said the verger. He was hurt. The old cathedral in its dingiest and darkest moods was his love and his life.

They stood looking toward one of the great rose windows in the transept. "You are all sound asleep," he went on, "when the light is finest. It is here," bringing his feet together on a well-worn stone, "that you should stand early in the morning if you want to see the true beauty of those windows."

A strange voice answered.

"May I come to-morrow morning, then, my good Clément? You know I am greedy enough to gloat over the place in its every possible aspect."

Gabrielle had not noticed a man standing near in the shadowy aisle, and she went slowly away as he approached.

"I shall not open the doors so early to-morrow; it is better to come in the afternoon, as usual," grumbled the old man, not yet mollified.

There were spots of flame on the stone arches, and a broad blue bar slanted down into the chapel of St. Francis. The afternoon sun blazed on the delicate tracery of the great rose window, and on the twelve narrow arched openings below where glowed the gorgeous red of apostles' robes, popes with croziers and aureoled saints, and kings, in scarlet and ermine.

The architect was always here at the same hour, seated in the aisle that en-

circled the choir, while he sketched the effect of the vaulting at various points, the decoration of the arch over the sacristy door, or the design of a capital. Behind the choir were the stained-glass windows of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in deepest reds and blues, with their small medallion panes picturing the lives of the saints. Among them a more modern window asserted itself—vainly trying to rival their colouring—bearing an image of the Archangel Michael, warring and triumphant: the deep blue of his mantle was thrown, as the sun began to decline, straight across the face of the artist. It grew to be a signal for him to stop work, for by the time the sun had gone there would be no light left for sketching; but he was impatient of the garish half hour, and bore the archangel a grudge.

She was there, as he had seen her many an afternoon, in a seat in front of a huge pillar, from where she could see the full width of the transept and its two rosaces, and more than half the choir with its wine-red glow and the warm brilliance of the triforium. As the blue glare again dazzled him, the architect looked savagely at the archangel and began to put away his sketching materials. Suddenly a dark shadow obscured the blue. The girl was standing not far off, looking at him curiously.

"If she would stand there just an instant," he thought, "I could finish putting in that figure." He seized his crayon and made rapid strokes.

"Pardon me—I am in your light," she said, apologetically.

"Pray, don't move!" he cried; "you are in the archangel's light—it is of the greatest service to me." She stood watching him, with a flicker of the old smile of "*la demoiselle grise*."

"Thank you so much!" he said in an instant. "You are very good. Now I can get my drawing off to the *École* to-night."

"That sculpture over the door is very beautiful."

## THE IDLER

"You come here every day——" he said, tentatively.

"You have noticed?—yet I have not seen you."

"You were in the chapel, or else sitting entranced with the colour in this glorious old place."

"I should like very much to see your drawings."

"I should find great pleasure in hearing you sing."

"You know?—how is that?"

"I have ears—not eyes alone—and I live near the cathedral."

"I am not allowed to sing for anyone yet. I must close my window. I did not think anyone heard but the gargoyles!"

"Please do not shut us all out! It is very faint and sweet; I could not tell for a long time where it came from. You should sing on Christmas Day in the cathedral."

Gabrielle was trembling. It was all so unexpected, and she could not half see this man now the sun had dropped down. "Please do not speak to anyone of my voice—yet. It would displease my master."

"Then I beg that you will soon give me the pleasure of hearing it. I am haunted by its beauty already. Mademoiselle, if you do not, we shall all pray to be turned into gargoyles!"

Gabrielle laughed. "Is there anyone but you?"

"A friend who arrives to-morrow. Will you do me the great honour some day to sing in my studio?"

"I will ask my master—there is time enough yet," she said. The thought of her kind Marot restrained her as no influence had ever done. She surveyed the tall, muscular stranger critically as she left him. His suggestion offered a break, a variety in her monotonous life, but she walked away with a deliberation new to her. "I will tell Marot, mon cher maître," she thought, singing softly as she went up the stairs to her room, and opened the shutters to let in the

last rays of daylight. "I kiss my hand to you, *gargouilles*! You look kinder than last night, and there is yet some joy in living."

Mechanically she turned to her glimpse of the square. The architect stood in the window, between the crimson curtains, which he had pushed aside against the stone framework. He gave an exquisite military salute. Gabrielle sank back in a chair and laughed with childish delight.

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Old Marthe came panting up the stairs with a basket of fresh flowers. "A servant has just brought them—and you will find some writing here." Gabrielle roused excitedly out of sleep.

"Where others are enjoined to silence, the language of the flowers may convey a fitting tribute to a beautiful voice."

Monsieur l'architect was abroad and astir early. His windows were open, and her eyes wandered to them as they had ever done, as if drawn by a magnet. That day a letter came from Marot, saying that he was ill and might not come to Tours for a fortnight. So that, two days later, when a servant brought a formal and courteous note begging mademoiselle to give the great pleasure of her singing to the Comte de Vilars and his friend, she hesitated no longer, but, escorted by old Marthe, who gabbled and rebelled, but yielded as ever, crossed the square to the alluring doorway of mellow, fretted stonework.

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Gabrielle stood by the window, fingering the elusive, delicious draperies of crimson silk. The Comte, who was grave, muscular, serious, absorbed in his art, directed a servant in arranging a little table of refreshments. He was a new type to the interested eyes of Gabrielle. She was quite at her ease, standing in her old grey gown with a wide black hat that shaded her eyes. Suddenly he stopped before her with a smile and gesture that might have



delighted a queen. "I am selfish enough to wish to hear the first song myself—my friend will soon arrive. Will mademoiselle begin?"

When she had stepped forward, he threw himself into a huge carved chair and waited with his eyes fixed upon her in a dreamy, indolent expression.

She sang with a vigour and gradation of tone that would have delighted Marot. As she lingered over the close, the door opened, and another man entered.

the new beauty of her voice there crept the old *verve* and fascination that had held audiences in Paris.

The sculptor and the architect came toward her exclaiming in their enthusiasm. The former bent to kiss her hand, while the Comte placed a chair and offered her a glass of wine. M. Leroux's eyes, it seemed to her, did not leave her face.

"If I am not to sing any more?" said Gabrielle, raising her hand to the glass.

"If mademoiselle will. I did not



\* THE LANGUAGE OF THE FLOWERS MAY CONVEY A FITTING TRIBUTE TO A BEAUTIFUL VOICE."

He bowed to the singer with the manner of a Paris exquisite. "I was in time to hear the last few notes of divine sweetness. Vilars, this is too bad! I would not for the world have missed any of this pleasure."

"Mademoiselle will be generous, and give you an equal chance to judge of her great talent. I have never heard a more beautiful voice," said the Comte.

Gabrielle looked from one to the other, knew them both appreciative and enraptured with her singing, and into

dare to ask, thinking she might be fatigued."

"I could sing on and on when an audience listens as you do, messieurs!" She was laughing and elated, and her old audacity rushed over her beneath the admiring glances of Leroux.

"Here is a song that I have learned—without the aid of my master!" She was suddenly "La Grise" again, flinging bewitching glances at her listeners. The men applauded frantically, and she sank down, breathless and radiant, on a

## THE IDLER

wide carved bench, while Leroux brought her cakes and wine.

"And yet, mademoiselle, that last is not worthy of you. You are destined for such great things," said the Comte.

"I know! I know! But there is life, there is joy, just in that reckless and foolish thing."

"Mademoiselle could make the poorest melody worthy if she gave it the charm of her voice. I am indeed fortunate to have left Paris, where there are now no singers."

Gabrielle met the sculptor's eyes thoughtfully.

"Monsieur will be some time in Tours?"

"The Comte kindly asks me to stay, and I shall have the use of his studio. I hope that you will come again—not once, but many times."

The Comte, on some pretext, left the room, and the two continued talking alone.

"You have enchanted me, mademoiselle, not only with the charm of your voice, but with your eyes, your face. Ciel! if I could have it in marble! The fact is this—I have promised a head for the Exhibition, and I have begun to despair of ever finding a model. It would be the greatest favour—and what exquisite lines—the forehead, the eyes—*Pardon!* but I am given to raving. Would you consent to sitting, at least, a few times?"

"I think—there is nothing to prevent," said Gabrielle. "My master, Marot, is ill and away, and I cannot sing and study all day."

"Marot! I know him well—the best of men! Do not let him know until it is finished, and we will give the marble, later, to him—that is, if I can bear to part with it. Marot! he is the kindest of men."

"He is, indeed. No one has ever been so kind to me."

"But you have shut yourself away. Why do you bar everyone out—why do you spend your whole youth——"

"Nothing must interfere with my work, and my promise to Marot. I owe him everything," said the girl, rising proudly.

"Nothing shall interfere, mademoiselle; but surely to spend an hour in these charming surroundings—to talk with such a man as the Comte, an artist and litterateur——"

"You efface yourself nobly!" she laughed. "I will come then, to have my profile modelled by a sculptor, and to talk—to the Comte."

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As it happened, the Comte was seldom in the studio, or passed in and out on some slight errand. The modelling took longer than was expected, and Marot remained so ill that before his return the head was finished, and Leroux had departed, carrying his precious work with him to Paris.

Gabrielle was hopelessly, overwhelmingly in love. The grave Comte had become her friend, but the sculptor, with his daring, insistent eyes, his enthusiasm, his reckless love-making, filled all her thoughts. She worked mechanically, but faithfully, according to her promise to Marot, and gazed up at the grinning stone faces above her window that seemed to mock at the hopeless thralldom binding her.

"I am in love!" she said to the darkening night.

"Listen! she is in love!" grinned the monster, ere the darkness veiled him.

For the first time she became utterly discouraged with her progress—dreaded the thought of a "career"; looked backward and forward at the months of drudgery past and to come, as if a limitless desert surrounded her, standing desperate and solitary. At intervals, when she had attained some self-command, Leroux's letters came to dispel all her calmness of soul.

She would throw her arms out on the dusty pile of opera scores and remain thus for a long time, with her face



hidden. She longed for Marot to return and break the horrible spell.

The Comte de Vilars appeared to understand. She talked to him a little as he sat sketching an altar piece in a side chapel. He, too, was soon returning to Paris, having taken the studio for a few months in order to make special studies in Tours for the course he was about completing. He was less grave when Leroux was away, and treated her

She had a glimpse of his face as Marthe opened the door, and ran upstairs in a tumult of new thoughts.

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"I am better, quite recovered," said Marot. "I leave to-morrow for Tours. I came in to see how all went with you and to take a look at your work, which I have never seen."

"You are more than welcome," said his old pupil.



"THE MODELLING TOOK LONGER THAN WAS EXPECTED."

as a child who needed to pour out her troubles.

One evening as he walked home with her in the dusk, Gabrielle began hesitatingly, "You are so good to listen—and I begin to be ashamed. I shall not talk of this any more."

The architect pressed her hand. "I am fond of Leroux, but you do talk a little too much about him to suit my taste! I have something to say to you—to-morrow——"

"You sculptors say that the form is within the stone, that it takes but the sure and patient hand to liberate it. In the same way I set free a voice, by slowly breaking away its coverings."

"You would have discovered a horror to the world in liberating mine," said Léry, who loved thus to ridicule his master.

"This, too, is a thing of horror which you have freed," said Marot, pausing in his walk before a figure whose faulty

proportions struck the most untrained observer.

"That is—a mistake," said Léry, flinging a cloth over it somewhat angrily, "to which we are all sometimes prone."

"Show me your new reliefs," said Marot, desiring peace. "I hear they are very fine."

Léry walked to a corner and pulled the damp cloth from several pieces in process of modelling. As he explained them he did not notice that a covering had fallen also from the nearly completed marble of a woman's head, before which Marot stood riveted.

"Mais—c'est La Grise—c'est Gabrielle—how in the name of the saints have you done this?"

There was no loophole for excuse.

"You were not expected to see it—it is not quite finished," said Léry, hesitating and trying to laugh. Old Marot turned on him.

"Explain, sir," he demanded, "how you have tricked me. How have you seen the girl? You knew it was my express wish to keep her by herself—that I had staked a great deal on her operatic success. How did you find her out?"

"If you had not hidden her away so carefully, I should not have found her! I should never have found her in Paris. But when Gaston de Vilars wrote me of the exquisite voice he heard while he sat in his studio, and described the girl he saw in the cathedral, I felt sure it was La Grise—I went down and found her."

"So it took a pair of you to trick me?"

"Vilars knew nothing of you or of our acquaintance."

"Ah, I see! You feared he would not be party to any such manœuvre?" Marot's voice quavered bitterly.

"I was crazy over the girl, and I wanted a model of her head—this is almost promised for the Exhibition. What calamity is there? My good Marot, nothing worse has befallen!"

"I don't trust you—no, my God! I do not! Who knows but that you have bewitched her, turned her head with flattery—made her miserable?"

"She knows the world as well as I do."

"Come, an end of this—are you going back to her?"

"That is my affair."

"Ah, you have wrought some mischief, I'll be bound. You shall hear from me later," Marot thundered, as he went down the rickety steps of the atelier.

He could not go for consolation to Madame Marot, whose dark prophecies had been fulfilled.

The next night found him with Gabrielle in his studio at Tours; she speechless, spent with weeping, leaning against the heaped-up table where dust had lain unheeded since his weeks of absence. Everything spoke neglect, forgetfulness, ingratitude, to the overwrought feelings of Marot.

"Give up your singing? As well throw yourself into the sea—make way with your life."

"I cannot sing—it chokes me. I cannot work, unless I have some other end than the future you promise me. I love Léry—you say I must give him up, give up all thought of loving any man for years—years."

"He is a bad man."

"I am bad, too—yes, that must be the trouble. I love him."

"He will not love you. He will tire of you as he has tired of everything, and ridiculed all that he has once loved."

"You do not know him—you do not know all that he has said to me."

"I know more than enough. I know that you have both tricked and duped me—that I have been made a fool of once more. Go now, child; I am not calm enough to talk further."

"I never meant to dupe you. I know I broke my promise, but you were away—I was so discouraged and so lonely—*mon Dieu!*—after all, what is a woman



made of? In Paris, I had lovers,\* it was sometimes gay, and yet I worked——”

“Rubbish! falsehood! You knew what I demanded—after this I demand far more—and I have given what? Time, strength, energy, money—for this!”—snapping his finger. “Horrible! I kept you purposely from Léry, because I never trusted him.”

“He never told me—till the very last

Then she went out, down to the street, and straight to the house of the Comte de Vilar.

Though it was late, there was a glow of light in his studio windows. The Comte was shocked at the wretchedness in her face as she recounted all to him.

“I am unwittingly a party to all this, it appears,” he said with a shrug. “I, in fact, was sole means of bringing you



“I CANNOT SING—IT CHOKES ME.”

day—that he had seen me in the concert hall in Paris. Oh, my good master, believe me, I am not such an ungrateful creature! Perhaps I can still sing and work—I will! I will!—give me one more trial!”

Marot sat unmoved. Gabrielle’s face burned. She leaned for a moment against his chair, and he knew that she was weeping, but did not look up.

here. I did not believe it of Léry. I have a letter from him here that I have not yet opened.”

“Whichever way I turn,” murmured Gabrielle, “I seem to make myself and others wretchedly unhappy.”

The Comte looked up from the letter pale and cold as she had never seen him. “It becomes my miserable duty,” he said, averting his eyes, “to convey to

you the news that L ry is tired of the whole affair, sorry for his part in it, and anxious to withdraw. He has not been fair to Marot—mademoiselle, I would rather cut my hand off than tell you this.”

“It will take me a little time to believe it,” said La Grise, who grew suddenly as white as the marble statue behind her. “But I was too sure—I judged wrongly—why should I have expected—What can be done?” she murmured. “I can’t think; everything has come in such a whirl.”

“I will see Marot in the morning—anything else that I can do for you, always remember that I am ready—”

The poor girl could not even find words to thank him as they separated.

It was a night of hideous dreams. She stood on a dark, cold platform confronting a moving sea of stone faces, grotesque and horrible. Her voice, grown raucous and strange to hear, was quite out of her control; but at each fresh burst of her weird music the listeners bulged their eyes again, dragged their ears forward expectantly, and sent forth peals of sardonic laughter. L ry was there, too, turned griffin, mocking more horribly than them all. In the dark she called out for Marot—for M. le Comte—

It was morning, and there was his voice below, talking to old Marthe. “Tell mademoiselle to keep up courage—I have seen le m tre, he has promised to receive me in an hour, and there will soon be good news.”

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M. le Directeur leaned back wearily, wondered if his carriage was waiting outside, fumed because his assistant was not present to-day of all others, to spare him the thankless task of sifting bad from worse in the great influx of singers that the season had brought to Paris.

“I might be saved this—there is nothing good here to-day,” he muttered.

A few of the footlights were lit in the

great opera house, and a handful of people in the front fauteuils were criticising a soprano’s rendering of the Jewel Song.

“Heavy—high notes poor—bah! it is sacrilege to listen!” By an angry movement he conveyed to the chef d’orchestre that the soprano was not pleasing to him. The music ceased, and the disappointed singer retired from view.

“Whom have we now?” asked the director of a person of official bearing who approached him consulting a written paper.

“Mlle. D. She writes a charming letter; she has studied five years—her mother is waiting here across the aisle. She has spent all she had in her studies, and the assistant director encouraged her last spring and promised her this hearing.”

“Then it is his place to be here.”

The young applicant sang a difficult air of Mozart that must have cost her months of study. During its intricacies the director made a wry face. “What was Mabillard thinking of? Tell her to go back and practise a year on that trill.”

“She may be nervous.”

“All the worse. No, I have no patience with her.” The official returned with the message, and the singer descended to the elder woman in rusty black. They went slowly out arm-in-arm, the mother in tears.

“My time is up; I am due at the Place de l’Etoile. Finish the rehearsal, I am just leaving,” he said to the chef d’orchestre, and made his way out. Two people were entering by the same side door.

“My good Marot! I am about departing! What brings you here?”

“What do I bring here?—an exquisite voice. This is Mlle. Gabrielle Tr mars, a contralto.”

“Better a soprano, we are in need of them. My contralto parts are filled.”

“I wrote to you some time ago.”



"Yes, but I at one time understood that the lady had forsaken her art."

"On the contrary," said Gabrielle, "I have more ambition, I am more confident of success than ever."

"That is well said, but—you will excuse me to-day, Marot. I am already late, and as I said, no contraltos are needed at this time."

"At least hear her for five minutes, my good director, for the sake of old times."

"No, no—you must excuse me, my nerves are unstrung, My singers are all engaged; the cast is full. I have told them to refuse all other applicants. I am on the verge of distraction with so much bad singing."

Marot looked as if about to despair. It was true he had come unheralded, venturing on the knowledge that the director himself was to hold a hearing to-day. He had seized the first opportunity in many months to have a free afternoon with Gabrielle in Paris. Fate had been against him—appointments made with the assistant director had been cancelled for various trivial reasons. Now the season was late, but he had felt assured of success in the matter of the voice that three years of his instruction had rounded and perfected. As the director replaced his hat and pushed past them down the corridor muttering some apology, the good Marot's face fell.

Not so with Gabrielle. The loss of this chance would mean months, perhaps a whole year, of delay. Some singers had waited for years on this man's

pleasure. She drew her arm out of Marot's.

The footsteps of the director were far away down the deserted corridor. If he reached the door at the end——

Laughing, with the old audacity in her eyes, she sped after him. Marot heard one of her marvellous trills bubbling like the spring notes of a bird; then the whole great rich beauty of her voice poured forth, echoing in the marble corridor, thrilling her old master as no tones of hers had ever done.

Far away, around the curve of the passage, the director paused. The singer, too, stood still, but her music flooded on. She saw a swing door open, and Mabillard join the other man with a questioning glance. "What is this—this great organ voice?" cried the director, as she paused for breath. With their hats in their hands, the two men came toward her.

"Mademoiselle, you have conquered. Return with us, if you please, to the stage. I am overwhelmed! M. Marot, this great voice—we must have it. I have heard nothing like it."

\* \* \* \* \*

A year later, in the foyer, two men were walking.

"I shall be quite content," said the Comte de Vilars, "to be the husband of a great opera singer, even though the world shall credit me with little individuality of my own. Gabrielle, perhaps, is not deeply in love with me——"

"If that is so—which I doubt—all the better for her Art. Yes, I am still merciless!" laughed Marot,

# THE DIVERSIONS OF A PRINCESS

By A. CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

## I.—THE REV. MR. GREGSON

"H E'S much too good for you," said Wisdom.

"How can I be improved if I never know anyone better than myself?" said Anne. "It's a good deed to flirt with Mr. Gregson if it brightens his life. An East End curate has a very hard time of it. I listened to your dictates and sent away Willie Addleshaw, and now my spirits are low I and want spiritual comfort."

"You are only amusing yourself," said Wisdom.

"And Mr. Gregson's poor people," said Anne. "I'm going to sing to his Factory Club boys, poor darlings."

"I thought Mr. Gregson formed his Factory Club to give the poor refined amusement," said Wisdom.

"My songs are not vulgar," said Anne, defiantly. "'Mary was a House-maid' is only coquettish. I sing it with point, to make it amusing. One can be amusing without being vulgar."

"You might not be thought vulgar on the stage of the Tivoli——" said Wisdom.

"I'm not so certain," said Anne, thoughtfully. "I can't help seeing the possibilities of the song, and I have such a wonderful gift of suiting myself to my company, that——"

"In any case your coquettish songs will scarcely help to educate the factory boys up to Mr. Gregson's high ideals," said Wisdom, quickly.

"I'm sure the boys will love my songs," said Anne.

"What will Mr. Gregson feel like while you are singing them?" said Wisdom.

"We go down to amuse the boys, I hope, not each other," said Anne.

"Mr. Gregson will be even more grieved than shocked," said Wisdom.

"I like shocking Mr. Gregson," said Anne, wickedly; "he's so sweet when I'm penitent."

"You like the excitement of confessing your sins to him," said Wisdom, coldly. "And you are so flattered at your wickedness having such an effect on him that you do not care how much you make him suffer. Remember that he believes you have a soul."

"I don't see why he shouldn't have an interesting soul to save now and then as well as his stupid factory boys," muttered Anne, slightly ashamed of herself all the same.

"You know perfectly well that whatever impression Mr. Gregson makes on you is a purely emotional if not wholly imaginative one," said Wisdom. "Your soul is never affected in the least."

"But my heart is," said Anne. "I think it is perfectly fine of a cultured man to waste—I mean spend—all his time in a filthy slum."

"That's what Mr. Gregson's wife would have to do," said Wisdom.

"Oh, why be serious?" said Anne, trying not to listen to Wisdom's plain speaking. "Why not take things lightly?"

"Because Mr. Gregson doesn't," said Wisdom. "That's why you like him, you know—because he takes life seriously."

"It's so interesting to know a man who puts being good before being clever



or amusing himself or even making money," said Anne, reflectively. "I've never looked up to any man before. I'm quite serious in my respect for Mr. Gregson!"

"Don't mistake hero worship for love," said Wisdom; "or respect for mutual sympathy. It's been done before with disastrous consequences."

"I wish you'd be quiet," said Anne, desperately. "Who's thinking of marrying?"

"Mr. Gregson," said Wisdom. "He can't help seeing what an interest you take in his work among the factory boys."

"I'm interested in such heaps of things," said Anne.

"Mr. Gregson doesn't know that," said Wisdom. "Your enthusiasm is quite peculiar to yourself. And remember you told him your ideal life would be to live in a slum as he did, and work among the poor."

"You can admire things without doing them, can't you?" said Anne. "I adore Kubelik's playing, but I don't go home and practise it. Still I always find everything interesting that I do, so if I did marry Mr. Gregson, and lived in his slums, I might catch his enthusiasm and be contented——"

"To give up all your other interests?" said Wisdom. "Theatres, parties, friends, flirting, travelling——"

"One must eat one's cake or keep it," said Anne. "Suppose I choose to keep it?"

"Stale cake's unappetising," said Wisdom. "After you've married Mr. Gregson, and tied yourself up for life, you might regret it if you came up West and saw the restaurants, the shops, the park, the friends of whom you are so fond! No one who knows you lives at Bethnal Green! It's too far to drive to. Think how you'd feel when you had to mount an omnibus and jolt back to its loneliness, away from all the fun and friendship."

"Oh, I couldn't," said Anne; "I'd have to stay up West for a bit anyway!"

"And leave Mr. Gregson alone in his miserable little rooms?" said Wisdom. "He'll be climbing the stair now, tired and saddened after his hard day's work. You are sitting here in this cosy chair, before a blazing fire, well-dressed, well-dined, well-satisfied! But Mr. Gregson is coming home to find no fire, no flowers, no brightness, not even a good supper!"

"Oh, poor, poor Mr. Gregson," said Anne, with the ready tears coming to her eyes.

"What are you doing?" said Wisdom.

"No flowers!" said Anne, and she emptied the bowl of roses that an Express messenger had brought to her that morning. Outside the window the rain dashed against the pane. "His room shall be brightened," said Anne. "I'll brighten it myself."

"You can't go to Mr. Gregson's rooms alone to-night," said Wisdom.

"He shall have a fire," said Anne, "and a supper. I'll cook it myself. I'll take my chafing-dish."

"But what will people say?" said Wisdom.

"No one who knows me lives in Bethnal Green," said Anne.

"What will your people think?" said Wisdom.

"I don't much care," said Anne, and she rung the bell. "They ought to be used to me by now," said Anne.

"What will Mr. Gregson think?" said Wisdom.

"That he has one true sympathetic friend," said Anne, heroically.

"His father was a bishop, and his sisters——" said Wisdom.

"Bother his sisters!" said Anne.

A maid appeared.

"Whistle a hansom, please," said Anne.

"You can't go alone," said Wisdom.

"I am going to cheer up a fellow-creature," said Anne, and she wrapped paper round the wet stems of the roses.

"Mr. Gregson will be far too embarrassed to enjoy your society," said

Wisdom. "He's an Oxford man—a county man! He'll insist on seeing you home at once; he'll be shocked out of his respectable skin; he'll be pained to death to think he should have been the cause of compromising you; and he'll most certainly propose to you. He'll think it his duty."

"Oh, dear!" said Anne. "Why can't girls be kind to men, without being misunderstood?"

"Men are too conventional, not to say conceited," said Wisdom. "Mr. Gregson is eligible! He will never respect you

quite so much if you go to-night, even though he propose to you!"

"I should refuse him, of course!" said Anne, indignantly.

"Then he will justly feel you are a heartless flirt to have shown such vivid interest in him, and lured him to humiliation," said Wisdom.

"It's a hateful—hateful world!" said Anne; but she put down the flowers.

"The hansom is here, miss," said the maid.

"I've changed my mind," said Anne.

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## MATILDA IN THE BARN

By GUY WETMORE CARRYL

THE barn's the bestest place on earth in summer, when it rains;  
The drops make kind of corkscrews on the dusty window-panes!  
Our feet sound loud as anything, in walking on the floor,  
And Clem and me we telephone through knot-holes in the floor!

We peep in at the horses, and they always turn around,  
And chew, and chew, and chew, with such a funny, crunchy sound,  
And their eyes are kind as kind can be. I like them that way best,  
Just without the little shutters that they wear when they are dressed.

Their clothes are hanging near them, and they're proud of them, perhaps,  
Though they're nothing but suspenders, buckles, chains and little straps.  
There's one whose name is Lady, but the rest of them are him,  
And they all make snorting noises, just like Clement when he swims!

The hay is soft and prickly, and the dust gets in your nose,  
And on the beams above you sit the pigeons, all in rows.  
They are brown, and white, and purple, but you can't get near to pat,  
Though I think they ought to let you, 'cause they purr just like a cat!

But for sliding, and for hiding, and for snuggling in a nest,  
The hay's the bestest thing on earth—and I stumped all the rest!  
They stumped me to go down the shoot: I wasn't stumped by them;  
I beat them all at sliding—essepting only Clem!

But though the barn's the bestest place in summer for a game,  
You find that in the winter it isn't just the same.  
It isn't that it's lonely, and it isn't that it's cool,  
But Clement's down at Newport, at Mr. Someone's school!

Then I watch the lilac-bushes, for I'll tell you what I've found:—  
When all the buds grow purple, and the leaves get big and round,  
They shut up Mr. Someone's school, as quick as quick can be,  
And summer comes—and Clement—to the hay-loft and to me!



## CHERRIES IN KENT

By MARY TRACY EARLE

*"No man can gather cherries in Kent at the season of Christmas"*

NIGHT had overtaken the coast train. The dun-coloured marshes lost the gilding of the level sunset light and retreated in dimmer and dimmer stretches on each side of the track. Bays and bayous glimmered still and dark, reflecting the big, soft stars. The marshes fell behind, and pine woods closed around the hurrying train; a sweet smell of pine smoke came in through the open windows. The train shrieked at every siding, and stopped wherever a solitary station light and a cluster of carriages waited. At the more important stations little boys with various refreshments to sell invaded the carriages, and cried their wares again on the station platform.

At the larger towns the passengers left the train in talkative groups, and as it sped forward Eleanor Hollingsworth found herself alone in her compartment. She sat almost breathless, gazing out. The train seemed to have no further object except to carry her, and the panting of its engine showed its zeal on her behalf. She was returning to her native village for the first time since her childhood. Her brother, who had owned their old home, was dead, and in his place were some nieces whom she had never seen, and Mr. Charlie Shepherd, an old playfellow, who was now her nephew by marriage. She was nervously eager to have the journey over, and to find if strangers were waiting for her, or friends.

She had thought that Charlie would meet her at the train, and as she stepped on to the platform she looked about

for a short, slight, sweet-faced man such as she knew Charlie must be. When some one, tall and broad-shouldered, came hurrying toward her she gave an exclamation of surprise and met him with an expression more startled than glad.

"Well, Howard Beach!" she said with a visible effort to be at ease. "How do you happen to be here? It's about the last place for a casual meeting——"

"But I'm not meeting you casually," Beach answered, with the advantage of not having been taken by surprise. "Mrs. Charlie Shepherd sent me to bring you down from the train. Charlie was called away for a couple of days, and as none of the family knew you, I offered to come."

"It was very kind of you," Eleanor said, walking at his side in a daze. "But how do you happen to be here? Are you visiting my people?"

"No; but I've been staying in the neighbourhood two months, sketching; so I'm well acquainted with them." He helped her into the narrow cart, untied the horse, and got in beside her. "If this equipage hadn't been so diminutive one of the girls would have come up with me," he explained. "They talked of coming, three or four of them, in the double carriage, but I told them it would be pleasanter for you to meet them first at home."

The cart whirled over the hard, glimmering shell road of the village and out into the shadow of the pines. Eleanor said nothing. The scent of pines was still fresh in the air after the day of sun-

shine, and the great bright stars kept abreast of the carriage like friendly convoys in the narrow opening between the pines. She could feel that Beach was handling the reins nervously. If he had had the advantage of preparation, she was making an advantage of her own out of silence.

Beach turned toward her, trying to read her face through the dusk. "To tell the truth," he resumed, abruptly, "I wanted a chance to speak to you alone. If it annoys you to find me here, invading your province, I'll go away. I had no idea you were coming down here—you never have before—and I didn't even hear of it until a few days ago. You made up your mind suddenly?"

"Yes," Eleanor said; "there is nothing to hold me in one place more than another. I am free to go and come."

"I know," he assented; "you think that freedom is the whole of life."

She made no answer. Once in a while she leaned forward, as the light in some house gleamed out. "I am trying to remember the road," she told him. "It seems long and unfamiliar, as if I had never been over it before."

"The length is in the time since you were here. They tell me you were only a child."

"And my childhood is terribly remote," she sighed lightly. "Think of it, all my grown-up nieces have been born since I came away. Tell me about them. I know nothing except from their letters."

"They are pretty," Beach answered, "particularly the youngest, Jessamine. She is posing for a picture I've begun. I think it's going to distance anything I've tried before."

"It will have to be very good, then."

Beach shrugged his shoulders. "I'm pretty well along with it," he said after a moment. "I can finish it somewhere else."

"Why should you? It would never be so good."

"Then you don't mind if I stay?"

"Mr. Beach," her voice trembled a little, "we've been good enough friends to live in the same town and meet in the same circles before—why not here?"

"Thank you," he said, and there was a different note in his voice, too. "You are always generous. I'll stay—at least, until the picture is finished."

Eleanor leaned back in her place, and the cart sped on. At last Beach turned out of the main road and whistled. Some one came running down a driveway and opened a gate. The cart swung up the drive and stopped before a house with all its doors and windows open wide, and lamplight streaming out around a group of people waiting on the verandah.

Almost before Beach could help her down, Eleanor was clasped by eager arms. "I'm Dorothy," a voice said; "oh, I'm so glad you have come!"

"I'm Louise," said another voice, "and here's Dabney——"

"And I'm Jessamine. Why, how young you are! You don't look like an aunt at all."

They encircled her and passed her from one to another in a babel of welcome. Besides the immediate family there were relatives of all degrees. She stopped trying to remember or to reason out the relationships, but kissed one after another in bewilderment. A young man was standing in the background. She supposed he was waiting for his turn, but Dorothy, as she brought him forward, said, "You needn't kiss this one, Aunt Eleanor. This is our neighbour, Penn Saunders."

"Now, Dorothy," the young man protested, "that's not loving thy neighbour as thyself." He took Eleanor's hand, and they exchanged a glance of impulsive good-fellowship.

"Penn ought to be counted in—it's only taking time by the forelock," some one declared.

"That's something I've learned never to do," Eleanor said. She glanced across



at Jessamine, and saw that the bright rose-colour of her cheek had deepened. She was more than pretty; she was picturesque and winsome enough to remember all one's life. For an instant Eleanor's face was wistful, losing its look of youth.

Next morning the unfamiliar country dawn woke the newcomer before anyone else in the house was astir. She dressed and stole out-of-doors. Full sunlight was driving the rosy sunrise colours back from the open bay into little sheltered coves along shore, where they lingered after the rest of the water was rippling blue. She walked down through the garden towards the beach, holding her skirts away from the dew-pearled roses. Every breath of air and every blossom was a welcome home.

At the end of the garden the land broke off into a ragged bluff of sand and clay, down which a rickety board stairway led to the beach, just as it had led years ago. She pushed aside the long banners of grey moss which hung from an oak tree and fluttered across her view. The bay spread unclaimed before her, waiting for her, and its light was reflected from her face,



"THE CART WHIRLED OVER THE HARD, GLIMMERING SHUDDER ROAD."

Penn Saunders came along the beach below. She did not see him until he called out to her, before swinging himself up by the bare roots of an oak tree.

"You had just thought of something before I spoke to you," he said after they had exchanged good-mornings. "I was half inclined to go by without disturbing you."

"I'll tell you what I had thought of," she answered frankly :—

"‘Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose  
And Jamshid's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows,  
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,  
And many a Garden by the Water blows.’"

If you had come back after being away as long as I have you'd see how that fits everything."

Penn's face lighted up. "I've seen it without ever being away," he said. "I'm glad you care for Omar. I tried to read him once to Dorothy and Jessamine, and they nearly mobbed me. I had to throw the book to Charlie to save it."

"Does he like it?"

"Of course he doesn't—not more than a dozen lines—but he doesn't take it the way the girls do. There's a streak of understanding in him for the things with which he doesn't sympathise. Now the girls are simply shocked. That's the advantage of being a man—oh, I beg your pardon, but you see I can say that to you because you like Omar."

Eleanor smiled. "But I don't like all of Omar all the time," she said. "He's good for certain moods."

"Well, that's a great deal," Penn cried, enthusiastically. "I'm sure we're going to be friends."

Eleanor laughed then. "Of course we're going to be," she declared. "I like you, you're so young, and I've been growing so fearfully old up in town."

"But the life must be great there," Penn said.

"Great! Yes, the life in one of those big cities is a great, terrible machine. You get caught among the

wheels and they carry you round and round; there's no stopping them even if they're tearing your heart out. I've seen girls——" She stopped, shaking her head.

"But I've seen you," Penn declared. "You're not the sort of a wreck that makes a good warning."

"You don't know anything about it. I may look all right, but I'm a Dead Sea fruit. Why, I dried up and blew away—that's how I got here. The wind was in the right direction, and I blew down here to see if roses bloomed in the country still, and if there was such a thing as happiness."

"Happiness," he ventured, rather shyly, "there must be for you. I think you are one of the people who make it around them."

"No," Eleanor said. "Dorothy is like that, and Jessamine may be, but I'm too restless. I must find it."

They were silent a moment. Down the garden walk came the sound of light, swift feet. "La-e-hoo!" called a girlish voice.

Penn's face quickened, and he sent back the call. Jessamine came in sight between the rosebushes, swinging a white sunbonnet by the strings. Another white sunbonnet hung on her shoulders, tied carelessly in front.

"Aunt Eleanor, you don't know how your face is going to burn if you come out bareheaded before you get used to the sunshine," she cried. She settled her extra sunbonnet dexterously on Eleanor's softly fluffed hair, and tied the strings under her chin. "Now," she said, as if she were speaking to one of Dorothy's small daughters—"Now you may go and play."

"I will, if I've not forgotten how," Eleanor promised; "but, children, don't ask me to play very much with Howard Beach. He and I squabble over our toys."

\* \* \* \* \*

Eleanor was not happy, but the novelty of her environment kept her from know-



ing quite how unhappy she was, and nobody else knew, for in the fresh air and freedom she grew visibly younger day by day. The worn look left her face, and sometimes, with a sudden tremor, she wondered if her mirror showed the truth, she looked so girlish.

"Almost young enough to paint," she said once, nodding at her reflection in the glass. Then she looked out of the window at Jessamine and Beach in the garden. He sat in the shade of a live-oak painting, and she could see full into his face; it was so rugged and clear-eyed that out of the shadow he seemed to penetrate the meaning of the sunshine. Jessamine was part of the sunshine; she stood in it, and belonged to her bright dress. Her voice rose through its stillness in a sweet mock-pathetic tone.

Eleanor went downstairs to Dorothy. "Jessamine is the queerest child," she said. "I just heard her saying that she was tired of posing—or pretty nearly saying it. Any other girl would think it was *such* a compliment to be asked by him."

"Oh, I think Jessamine appreciates it," Dorothy said; "only, when she began, she had no idea it would last so long. It's a little hard, but of course she's glad to do it."

The holiday feeling gathered strength each day. Outings by land and water were arranged for Eleanor's benefit, and in honour of her forthcoming birthday a grand fête-day had been planned, to conclude with a display of fireworks. The preparations were extensive, the entire household being pressed into service. Jessamine claimed to be glad of a vacation from the picture, but she wandered about like an odd sheep, doing small, inconsequent tasks, while Eleanor did the planning of the decoration, with Penn at her right hand.

Dorothy and Louise and Charlie bustled to and fro with a hundred things upon their minds, giving general direc-

tions and praising effects; Dabney retired into herself and practised on the piano, and the children were in everybody's way until Dorothy detailed Jessamine to take them driving for as long as her patience lasted. It did not last for more than an hour, and she came back, looking a trifle bored, just as Eleanor and Penn finished the decorating.

Penn was out on the verandah trying to get started for home. It was a saying that Penn put in his spare time at home, reading law, but did his regular work at Charlie's. Jessamine turned the children loose in the yard, and marched by him without any exchange of pleasantry. In the room where Dorothy and Eleanor were giving a last admiring glance to the beautiful walls, she sank into a chair.

"I'm tired to death!" she exclaimed. "Aunt Eleanor, you must be absolutely worn to shreds."

"I haven't felt it at all—I never get tired down here," Eleanor answered. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks flushed with excitement. She took off the sunbonnet she had been wearing to protect her hair and swayed it girlishly to and fro. "I was tired to death before I came," she added. Her face grew whimsical. "Do you know, I almost believe that when I thought 'I came here I died, and this is my resurrection.'"

Dorothy turned from her rapt consideration of effects. "What do you mean by that, Aunt Eleanor?" she asked in a puzzled tone. "You and Penn have been talking in riddles all day."

Jessamine leaned back in her chair. There was a queer little flash in her eyes. "Shall I call Penn in to interpret?" she asked. "He's still out on the verandah talking to Charlie."

"Don't stir, dear," Eleanor said, putting out a deterring hand. "I only meant that this is about my idea of Heaven."

Jessamine caught her aunt in a swift

embrace. "It's just Heaven to have you here," she declared.

The contact of the girl's warm, soft cheek was unexpectedly moving to Eleanor. She dropped her head upon Jessamine's shoulder, and clung to her as if she were clinging to happiness. "I've been so lonely," she murmured; "you don't know how it hurts to be lonely."

"Yes, I do," Jessamine said, and her voice grew almost sharp. "I'm not a child."

Eleanor looked up and caught a look of bitterness on the girl's face. "Oh, I'm so sorry," was all she could say. "Perhaps everybody knows what it is, but I didn't think people who belonged here could be lonely."

Jessamine closed her lips firmly and nodded her head. "They can," she declared. "I believe even you are lonely here sometimes," she added in a different tone — "the way you keep watching for letters."

"Oh, letters!" Eleanor answered carelessly, although it troubled her to think that her secret restlessness had shown itself. "It's one of my bad habits to watch for them. You know what Thoreau says: 'In proportion as our inward life fails, we go more constantly and desperately to the post-office.'"

Jessamine sighed. "I don't know quotations and things," she said wistfully.

"You're better without them, honey," Eleanor declared. "They cost such a lot." She picked up the white sun-bonnet and went to her own room.

The mirror had a new story to tell her as she looked into it. There were tears in her eyes. She turned and walked up and down the room thinking bitter thoughts. "I'd better go back," she said once, half aloud. She stopped at the window and looked out, trying to see through her perplexity. Penn Saunders and Charlie had walked down on to the pier together; Penn was rowing away now, and Charlie stood on the pier-head alone, taking a moment's rest.

Eleanor had long ago renewed her old comradeship with him, and she had noticed that his gentle wisdom was a refuge to every one. She ran bare-headed downstairs and out the garden path to the pier.

"Charlie," she said as she joined him, "your foolish relative is in trouble—she wants your advice."

"The blind stands ready to lead the blind," Charlie laughed.

She dropped on to one of the seats and looked up at him. There was a quiver about her lips. "You'd better send me back where I came from. I've been making Jessamine unhappy."

"Nonsense," Charlie expostulated.

"No," said Eleanor, and the colour came up and burned over her face, "it's my foolish friendship for Penn. I'm so much older, and he's such a dear—I never dreamed it could be misunderstood. In fact, I supposed that there were some things that one gained by growing old, but it seems that one gains nothing and loses everything. I ought to have known; but then she seemed so interested in Howard Beach——"

Charlie sat down beside her. "Something has happened between Penn and Jessamine," he said,— "something before you came. Dorothy and I think they quarrelled over her posing. Penn had a foolish notion that it wasn't proper; it was just a bit of crankiness, but he carried it too far. We had been thinking them as good as engaged before that, but I suppose Jessamine resented his trying to dictate. So you see it isn't your fault at all."

"But what a time for her aunt to come blundering in and monopolising him! I never expected to make that kind of troublesome aunt."

Charlie smiled, but Eleanor's face was deeply troubled.

"I ought to have known better," she went on. "I ought to have known that a girl and boy like that couldn't live here side by side without loving each other."



"Don't you think Jessamine is a trifle unreasonable?" Charlie asked. "She quarrels with Penn and seems to be interested in another man, and then she feels badly because Penn devotes himself to another woman. I don't think I'd grieve much over my part in it if I were you. It will all come straight soon enough."

Eleanor gazed across the water with eyes narrowed to keep back the tears. "They would have made it up long ago if I hadn't been here," she declared. "That's always the way. When things begin to go wrong misunderstanding follows misunderstanding—oh, I know, and I can't forgive myself."

"But no one had told you about their quarrel."

Eleanor shook her head, refusing the excuse. Her lips were quivering. "What can I do?" she asked.

Charlie was silent a little while. Her distress was too poignant to be treated lightly. "Wouldn't it relieve the situation all around if you seemed a little more interested in Beach?" he ventured after he had thought. "It doesn't sound right to say, 'Why don't you absorb his



"I—I DON'T BELIEVE I CAN, CHARLIE."

attention so that the other two will be thrown together?'—but you women know how to manage such things."

Eleanor turned her face suddenly away. "I—I don't believe I can, Charlie," she said. "I'm not skilful in such tactics, like most women. And then, you see, we used to be better friends. We misunderstood each other. I thought I cared more for my work than for friendship, and when the two clashed I let friendship go. I've tried to make it right since, but I can't; he was disappointed in me—that's all."

"At least," Charlie began—he put his hand gently over hers, and his voice was a trifle husky, for they had always thought of her as unusually successful and happy—"at least you can be proud of the work you have done. No one can do the best work without some sacrifice."

She flashed around toward him defiantly. "Well, I'm not proud of it," she said. "What good do I get out of it for myself? What comfort is it to *me*?"

He hesitated. She had never talked like this to him before, only to Penn. "Why, your work *is* you, isn't it?" he asked.

"No, it isn't. If it were, why should I be wandering about trying to learn the secret of other people's happiness?"

His hand closed more firmly over hers. "Is that why you came here?"

She nodded, choking back a sob. "But I came too late. 'No man can gather cherries in Kent at the season of Christmas,' and it should have been written, 'no woman.'"

"Eleanor," Charlie exclaimed, "Jessamine has been making *you* unhappy."

She drew her hand away and sprang to her feet. "Oh, how you must despise me," she murmured. For a moment a confusion of justifications crowded to her lips. "Is it just because she is so young—so beautiful. You can hardly understand a life that grows poorer instead of richer every year. I have sacrificed too much to my work—my heart and soul, pretty nearly——" She paused, recognising the impossibility of making him forget what he had seen. "There is one comfort—Jessamine need never know," she added finally. "I shall soon be gone, and she can choose between them."

The sun set before they started back to the house, and as they walked up through the garden together a thin fog closed around them; it was blowing across from the south-east, and it soon stretched across the bay, blotting out the faint colour in the west.

They loitered, talking of indifferent things. "We'll not be able to see the fireworks at all if the fog grows any thicker," Charlie said.

"Think of it—twenty-five years since I've seen fireworks," Eleanor sighed, as if the lack of them had been her chief sorrow.

"We'll give you plenty of them to-night," Charlie promised, pleased that she had regained her poise.

The supper bell rang out and they went into the house. During the meal she was marvellously gay. Her cheeks had never looked so bright, and no one noticed that she was pale around the lips. Neither Penn nor Beach was there, but they were coming later in the evening, after the children's bed-time. Until they came there was an opportunity for everyone but Dorothy and Louise to rest.

"I'm going to my room a little while," Eleanor said to Jessamine. "I'm tired after all, but I'll be down pretty soon. Don't call me if Penn and Mr. Beach come before I appear."

She went into the hall on her way upstairs. The fog, drifting in through the open door, felt like balm to her face. She went outside and wandered through it, thinking that in a moment she would turn back. The habit of her feet led them down the path to the pier, and she heard the row-boat nosing among the piles with a soft recurrent thud. The sound was as restless as her mood. She untied the boat and stepped into it, wondering why she had ever thought of shutting herself up in the house. Lights from the shore glimmered faintly through the fog, like very mediocre deeds. The red and green signals on the bridge were dimmed jewels. She took up the oars and rowed toward them. It would soon be time for the coast train, and Howard Beach would be on it, coming back from the city; she had a fancy to see its windows flash out of the obscurity and pass.

"I have been making Jessamine un-



happy"—"Jessamine has been making you unhappy"—it was better to be out alone in the weird, caressing mist than to mingle with other people when she could neither enjoy them nor add to their pleasure.

In the distance a faint whistle sounded. The train was coming. She rowed well over toward the shore, knowing that the train was late, but not knowing how late it was, she had no way of telling how long she had been out on the water, but she was determined to stay now until the train had passed.

She was facing the home shore as she rowed, but it was completely hidden. She felt very far away, and wondered if the family had missed her yet and had begun to be alarmed. Suddenly a rocket gleamed through the fog, breaking into a shower of opals. Another followed it and another. Eleanor had learned the distances along the shore so well that she was sure they came from Charlie's pier, and it gave her a new pain and loneliness to think that they had neither missed her nor waited for her before beginning their celebration. There was no hurry about getting back.

She turned toward the bridge and waited while the train rumbled on. When the headlight of the train pierced the gloom at the end of the bridge the signal was still against it. Eleanor waited breathlessly. She was so close that if the train had to stop she might catch a glimpse of Beach at one of the windows, looking out. It did not seem a poor, inconsequent pleasure; it was something for which to hope.

The train moved more and more slowly, and stood still, just as she had wished; but the figures at the windows were mere black silhouettes against the brilliant interiors of the carriages. The light shone blindingly into her face for a moment, and then she dropped her head into her arms. The light still shone on her figure, bowed and desolate.

Howard Beach was by himself in a compartment at the rear of the train,

looking absently over the water. He saw her face distinctly, and when he saw her hide it he opened the door with an impulse to call her name. She was all alone in the boat, drifting rapidly away from the bridge in an attitude of despair.

The necessity of reaching her kept him from wondering what had happened. He remembered that at intervals along the bridge there were little platforms where workmen could stand at one side and wait for a train to pass. He looked out eagerly. One of the platforms was so near that at the first slow forward motion of the train he could step on to it. There was only a moment to wait. The wheels began to turn, and he swung himself off unobserved.

Eleanor heard her name called; she looked up without believing the reality of the sound. Behind the train a dim figure was just discernible. She heard her name beyond all doubt, and, answering, rowed in bewilderment toward the bridge.

Beach crouched on the edge of his little platform.

"Row close," he called.

She rowed under the edge of the platform. The tide was so full that there was only a little distance for him to drop. The boat jarred and grew steady again. He sat down beside her on the rowing seat, and their eyes met. Neither of them spoke. Alone in the night, each felt sure why the other had come.

The pain did not leave Eleanor's face, and her nature was too direct for equivocation. "Don't be grieved," she said at last. "It's not your fault that I am sorry now it is too late. I never dreamed that you would see me—that I would seem to be asking for pity. It—coming here to watch for you—was a sort of good-bye. I—I want you to be happy."

"A good-bye," he echoed. He clenched his hand on the edge of the seat between them. "I did not call you to say good-bye."

The tears came into her eyes under his gaze and heartache held back her words. Through the pause came the report of a gun—once, twice, three times—at regular intervals. She made a tremulous motion toward the shore, where rockets, one after another, were still tracing blurred silvery lines.

"What is it?" he asked. "I believe you love me. Your work shall not come between us again."

"Jessamine——" she said brokenly. "Even if she does not love you—now that you love her—I—no—no——" She tried to draw away from him toward the edge of the boat.

"But Eleanor," he said, "I love you."

Wonder came into her face, and then joy. The moment was too solemn for caresses. She put out her hands and he locked them tight in his. "Just as I am?" she asked; "in spite of all that I have lost in these pitiful years?"

"Lost?" he said huskily; "in every moment of them you have gained. You ——" His voice broke, and the tide carried them in silence away from regret and doubt.

The gun on the home shore continued firing, regularly, monotonously, like a signal or a warning. Its sound meant nothing at first to the two in the floating circle of light inclosed by fog, but at last the insistence of it reached their ears.

"What does that mean?" Eleanor wondered.

"Does any one know you are out here?" Beach asked. "That doesn't sound like celebrating. Perhaps they are firing to guide you back."

"We'd better row in," she decided. Each took an oar, and they headed the boat toward home. The thoughts of the day came back to Eleanor. "Oh,"

she said, "I wish that Jessamine and Penn might have straightened things out between them, too."

Beach laughed contentedly. "If they haven't, they soon will," he declared. "A good example is everything."

The outlines of the shore began to form through the fog. There was a flickering light low on the sand, and suddenly a great bonfire leaped into flame. There were figures moving around it, and Eleanor gave a greeting cry.

The answer came back in a chorus. Eager figures ran along the pier, and as the boat touched the landing-stairs, Charlie and Penn lifted Eleanor out of it, nearly dropping her again when they found that she was not alone.

"I stepped off the train and brought her back," Beach said quietly. "She seemed to be lost in the fog."

A babel of questions and outcries arose. Charlie and Dorothy marched Eleanor between them up the pier. "Couldn't you see the rockets we sent up to guide you?" Dorothy asked. "After we had begun firing them, and you didn't come, Jessamine and Penn rowed up the bay calling you, but came back to see if you had come in."

"And when I saw the rockets I thought you had begun the celebration and were leaving me to rest—so I didn't hurry," Eleanor exclaimed in self-reproach.

"Well," Charlie said, "I bought the rockets especially for you, and we've used them for you. Only, it's too bad you missed them all. We sent up the last one, and then built the fire to take their place."

"But I saw them; they were my celebration just the same, and if you will only forgive me, this will be the happiest birthday in the world," Eleanor declared.



## LINKS IN A CHAIN

By ANNE STORY ALLEN

WHEN Great-aunt Loring died it was found that she had left me one of her most cherished possessions.

"To my niece Gloria I give and bequeethe my gold chane," so read the will.

Great-aunt Loring, convent reared, could neither spell nor cook; two delinquencies that had increased her unpopularity with the intellectual members of her own family and the domestic relatives of her husband. My dear father, being neither painfully intellectual nor uncomfortably domestic, had named me after his Aunt Gloria, for the simple and comprehensive reason that he liked the name and thought it would please the old lady.

So when Aunt Loring was gathered to her fathers, I came into possession of the heavy chain of huge gold links given her by the young husband who had died shortly after their wedding journey and before he had discovered her inability to cook or had found fault with her phonetic spelling.

At fifteen, being enamoured of silver bangles and desirous of a set, some sixteen abreast, that rattled delightfully as one moved one's arm, I broached the subject to father. Mindful of the fact that sundry favours had been granted in the recent past, and that father hated anything that jingled, I determined to demand nothing but my own.

"Dad," I said, humbly, "I should like to exchange my gold chain for some bracelets." I didn't dare say bangles.

"Eh?" said my father, looking over the top of his morning paper.

But my step-mother interrupted as I was about to make further explanation.

"She wants to exchange your Aunt Gloria Loring's chain for some silver bangles," she said, as I thought, very officiously. "She has about as much idea of money value as you have," she added in a lower tone.

My father's expression changed. The eyes that peered over the paper had looked a trifle vexed from being disturbed. Now they softened. He drew me toward him.

"The chain isn't really yours, Gloria, till you're twenty-one," he said. "If when you are twenty-one you don't want it you can exchange it—for a paper lamp shade if you like." He pulled some money from his pocket. "Get your bangles, child. Try not to rattle them while I'm reading, won't you?" And I promised.

But when my twenty-first birthday came, I wanted nothing that Aunt Gloria's chain could buy me. I wanted only Dad, and he had gone a long, long way, and it was going to be many years before I could start to find him.

Some years later I packed my three trunks and sent them to a most unfashionable quarter of the town; I put my cheque-book and Aunt Gloria's chain into my hand-satchel; I said good-bye to my step-mother, and shook the dust of her Persian rugs from the hem of my frock. As the angel dog and I stepped into the lift to descend in



a breath-catching swoop to the lower floor, it was not so much sorrow that I felt, as relief that I had left behind me the approval of my relative and the boredom of her constant society. And six months after that I met with Rosamond.

She was sitting in a corner—it was at one of those gatherings where everyone is strenuously Bohemian—and on her face was a fixed smile, in her eyes a timid expression. She was hemmed in by a newspaper woman in a pink golf coat, and a poet in evening clothes and a string tie. As I approached, the poet moved aside, mentioned our names in introduction, and, with the pink cloth arm linked in his, wandered away. Rosamond received me with a cordiality that I could not flatter myself was personal.

The next day a card was sent up, and my dull little room was brightened by a call from Rosamond. She had a small package in her hand.

"I never would have dared to come so soon if it hadn't been for this," she said.

*This was Aunt Gloria's chain.*

"I almost never wear it, and hadn't missed it," I replied. "It must have known that I wanted you to come, and got itself unfastened on purpose," and Rosamond dimpled and laughed, and the angel jumped up in her lap.

The chain having brought Rose and me together, and linked, as it were, our fortunes, retired once more to its resting place. It had seldom seen service, nor had it acted by proxy, even during the months when independence was to me like an ill-fitting garment, poor in quality and scant as to pattern, though the thought that it could so act had enabled me to face a bank book whose figures tottered and fell appallingly as I balanced their ranks, cruelly thinned and scarcely ever recruited. Yes, Aunt Gloria's chain, unconsciously powerful in its blue velvet casket, held my moral courage together with its ugly golden

links, and then the tide turned and came slowly in; slowly, but in.

When the happy family left its lodgings and moved to a real apartment with a truly kitchen, it considered itself in quite affluent circumstances. All the potboilers were working merrily. A few extras had provided some long sighed for frocks, and Rosamond had received a commission to paint a miniature of a fat-faced child of cherubic size and inanimate expression. "Full length," the fond mother had insisted, and though, as I explained to Rose, she would really have gotten a better price for full width, still it was a good order and we were thankful.

Upon this calm of our content there appeared one day a little cloud, rather larger than a man's hand, and in the shape of a square grey envelope containing the announcement that Rosamond's Aunt Georgia had arrived in town. Rose's wail was heartfelt and continuous, and the import of it was this.

Aunt Georgia had disapproved of Rosamond's course of action during the past three years. On Rosamond's determination to leave the socially unimpeachable town of Fairchester and the safe-guarded home of a devoted aunt, her inheritance had been handed over to her with the prophecy that she would in less than a year "make ducks and drakes of it." Lessons had been expensive, leisure to study and to learn more expensive than the lessons, only for the last year had orders begun to come in, and Rosamond's cheque book, staggering under the onslaught of her pen, bore eloquent witness of the fulfilment of Aunt Georgia's prophecy. There wasn't enough left to buy one respectable duck, Rose concluded in her mournful monologue.

"If there was," said I, "we'd buy one, or a bird of some sort and have your aunt here to luncheon to prove to her that you're not down on your luck; that there's money coming in—barrels of it," I finished, indignantly.



"Her idea of prosperity," exclaimed Rosamond, "is to invite people to eat things, expensive things. If I could give her a luncheon, not the kind that Hebe can get up, but an elegant one, even if there was no one but we three, she'd never suspect my money was all gone, and I do dread explaining so. This is the first time she's been in London for years and I don't see why she had to come now," and Rosamond with unaccustomed petulance threw the grey envelope into the fire.

I sat and thought hard, and just then a ray of light crept through the blue velvet case where Aunt Gloria's chain lay and out from my desk and across to me, and I saw it clearly. So I said quietly, "Rose, you will give your Aunt Georgia and me a luncheon on Thursday next, if that date suits her. And it will be a luncheon that Aunt Georgia will weep over and will gnash her teeth, with envy, I mean, because she never has given or eaten such a luncheon." And in order not to be questioned or to spoil my rhetorical effect I left the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

I made up my mind three times, and the last time I walked right past the door and home, quick. It wasn't as easy as I had hoped it might be. I sat down till I got my breath and then started again. At our door a bright



"WE REALLY LIVE VERY IMPLY," I SAID, LANGUEUELY.

thought struck me and I rang for a messenger. That was easier.

I smiled pleasantly on the messenger, bade him hasten, and mentally apologized to the blue velvet case as I gave it into his hands, carefully wrapped. Aunt Gloria's chain had never seemed so precious before, and I remembered I had forgotten to take the boy's number. I need not have worried. He was back shortly and handed me the envelope containing Rosamond's luncheon.

On Thursday, at two o'clock, a hansom stopped in front of our door. Rosamond and I were reconnoitering at the window. The angel dog nosed aside the curtains just as Aunt Georgia peered out of the cab window through her lorgnette. We darted back, and were able to receive her a few moments later with the reposeful air that marks the Vere de Vere hostess.

"Won't you take off your bonnet, Aunt?" asked Rose.

"No, dear child, no. I must run directly we've had luncheon. You won't mind, will you? So much to do, but had to come and take a little bite with you, dear, in your own little home. This naughty girl"—turning to me—got tired of her old auntie, and ran away to seek her fortune—or was it to spend it, dear?" So Aunt Georgia enlivened the minutes before Hebe, red in the face to the point of apoplexy, announced that luncheon was served. I only hoped Aunt Georgia did not notice the awed tone of our faithful servitor when she pronounced the word "luncheon." Something of it must have struck her, for she turned quickly to Rose.

"There were to be no other guests, you said, Rosamond. You've not put yourself out——"

"Not at all, Aunt," said Rose. "It was a pleasure to order a few things I know you like, and a few we think they make especially well here."

When the *hors d'œuvres* were served Aunt Georgia's face wore a puzzled expression. When the *consommé*, with her special brand of sherry, was put before her, she put up her lorgnette, and when the lobster cooked *à la* something she had never heard of smoked from the Dresden ramekin on her plate, she made incoherent replies to our remarks, and finally raised the bunch of Russian violets, which we all had, and glanced at the waiter keenly.

"You are extravagant children," she remarked, in a faintly playful tone. "You shouldn't have gone to so much—er—trouble for your old Auntie."

I thought I detected a slight weakening on Rose's part, and I rushed to the rescue.

"We really live very simply," I said, languidly. "We need the excuse of a guest now and then to revive our hospitable instincts. We always order in, it's so much easier in this little den of ours." As I told Rose afterward, it

wasn't a fib, for we do order in—now and then.

And then I went on, "Rose is working too hard. Which do you think would be better for her, a cottage in the country in the summer or a trip to Ireland? Quite simply, you know. One can travel so inexpensively nowadays. I have to count my pennies yet, but the tide's coming in for us both, isn't it Rose?"

Aunt Georgia must have thought the tide was coming in, in large and far reaching waves, for just at that moment the waiter—he looked almost like a butler—put before her an ice in which large strawberries did their best to hide their costly blushes.

The luncheon came to an end. The *à la's* and the *en brochettes* had all been served. Aunt Georgia's tone had distinctly changed from its off-hand semi-affectionate patronage. Surprise, wonder, amazement, incredulity, unwilling admiration, and finally respectful timidity had all expressed themselves through the medium of her voice and had been fortified and complemented by facial accompaniment. It was a subdued and chastened Aunt Georgia who sat by our sitting-room fire and sipped her coffee.

While we were talking the fat infant's mother was announced, and Rosamond excused herself.

"It is Mrs. Saunderson," I volunteered. "She has probably come to see about her daughter's miniature." I carefully neglected mentioning the daughter's age.

While Aunt Georgia was putting on the jet pall and arranging her veil, I had a feeling that she wanted to see Rose alone, so I went to my own den for a minute. I didn't dare leave Rose long, however.

I reached the sitting-room door again just in time.

"Oh, no, aunt," I heard Rosamond say, and I entered with more speed than dignity.



"Yes, your hansom is here," I began; and then, "oh, pardon me, I intruded."

"Not at all," said Aunt Georgia. She was holding a cheque in her hand, and spoke more confidently than I had heard her since we sat down to luncheon.

"It's a little present her uncle sent her—that is, told me to give her, if I thought best. I told him he was foolish to encourage her living this way—that is, the way I thought, I mean—well, to be frank, I am surprised at her success and pleased, too. So take it, child, with your uncle's love. That was a very good luncheon, child—what did you say was the name of that *entrée*?"

I told her the name, for Rose was in no condition to explain, and was holding the cheque in a half-hearted way.

"Lobster à la Bordelaise," I said.

"I must write it down," Aunt Georgia said. "Bordelaise—why, that has——"

"No, not Bordelaise," said I. "B—b—something," I fastened her glove for her. "I always forget the names of those things." I put her card case in her hand.

"Yes, Hebe, go to the hansom with Mrs. Seldon. Good-bye, good-bye."

"Good-bye, children," said Aunt Georgia. She looked to me like a benignant beetle, the antennae in her bonnet quivered good-naturedly. She kissed Rose. "I'm going to send you a little

cheque to put aside for that trip this summer," she said in a low tone. "We must keep you well and strong, the only artist in the family. Good-bye."

Hebe piloted her down to her hansom. Rose and I watched it bear her away. Then I sank into the biggest chair I could find.

"Just to think," said I, "that it took my Aunt Gloria's chain to drag that cheque out of your Aunt Georgia's pocket."

"She might have given it to me anyway," said Rose. "It didn't seem quite honest."

"Rose," said I, "there's the kind of honest that says, 'I've just twenty-five shillings left to my account. Here's an egg and a slice of toast; it's all I can afford.' And there's another kind of honest that says, 'I'm going to succeed. In fact I *am* succeeding. Have some luncheon. I don't know what it cost and don't care.' I like that kind of honest better.

Your Aunt Georgia is on the material plane, a good, substantial, well-peopled plane, where things talk loud enough for her to hear what they say. Talk to people on their own plane, my dear, else they may see your lips move but won't know what they are saying."

Rose ran into the hall.

"Get the ticket," she called. "I'm going to ring for a messenger."





“MY DEAREST MARCIA,—  
As you see, I’m in town much earlier than usual, but I’ve just been sent for, on account of a sudden illness of Aunt Mary’s. I came post-haste from the Lakes two days ago, to find her better, and that I can be of very little use, after all. So I have ‘time to burn,’ and to tell you how very glad I am to have you back in London once more. Two years is an impossibly long time to stay away from your friends, Marcia, and I’ve wanted you a dozen times in the interval, to say nothing of to-day—to-day more than ever.

“Something has happened that I can’t help telling you. There’s no one else I should think of writing it to, so I hope you’ll be forgiving and tell me—if you can—what to do. Last night, as I came home, just at dusk, I almost ran into the arms of a messenger, who handed me a special-delivery letter. Please say that they excite your curiosity, Marcia—especially if you don’t know the handwriting! I tore off one end of the envelope before I got into the drawing-room. It is all ghostly yet in linen covers and gauze-draped chandeliers, but, as it’s unusually cold for the time of year, there was a small fire burning on the hearth. This was my undoing. I tried to read by its light, but, finding that impossible, I twisted the scrap I’d torn off the letter into a taper and lit one of the candles on the

mantelpiece. Then I read what seems to me the best love-letter that ever was written! It said—but I can’t tell even you what it said, Marcia. Suffice it to say, the man who asks me to marry him *that way* is the only man I want to marry, and—but this you’ll never believe—I don’t know his name. I may as well tell you why, though I’m ashamed to. In tearing open the end of the letter, I had torn off his signature, and it was only a little charred scrap of paper on the hearth.

“You will say this doesn’t matter—that, of course, I know his name, anyhow. It’s hardly likely a girl would have a proposal of marriage with absolutely no clue to the man’s identity. Of course, it isn’t probable, and I have a clue. I know that my letter is from one of two men, but from which? Absolutely, I cannot tell.

“You see, it’s like this. I’ve been for a month at a little out-of-the-way place among the Lakes. A perfect dream of a lake has been dropped down among some hills, and there people have bought up land, and live in happy fellowship together, around a central club-house.

“There you grow to know one another better in a week than in a year of town life. This accounts for much you may think strange in my story.

“There were two men there who were very good indeed to me. I’ll go farther, Marcia, and say one of them was



misguided enough to fall in love with me. I say misguided advisedly, for I am not what he needs, or even wants, if he stopped to think. The other—this is the dreadful part — *I* was mistaken enough to care about.

"There! the worst is over. Neither of them spoke. I wouldn't let the first one, and the other wouldn't, because he thought—but, after all, perhaps he didn't want to speak. And, when affairs stood just there, I rushed off in answer to Aunt Mary's telegram. Both men were away when I left, and neither knew of my departure.

"In Amblemere, where you see everybody all day and every day, you can understand there is small need of correspondence. Hence, I've never seen the handwriting of either.

"To return to my letter. It says a number of very nice—possibly very foolish—things. You know the sort one wants if one cares about a man, and it ends by asking if he may come and say for himself what he thinks I must already know, but which he cannot leave unsaid, in some fashion, any longer. Then he signs himself 'Faithfully yours'—and the rest you know. The rest is a little bit of charred paper, and it is in my jewel-case this very minute. Could I feel like this if it wasn't the right man?

"I suppose they're both in Amblemere still, and one of them is wondering why I don't write, and I've been breaking my heart because I can't. I've thought of a thousand things to do, but all seem too stupid or too slow. It's such an absurd situation. Love doesn't find out the way at all. So, instead, Marcia, I appeal to you, and I feel sure you can help me.

"Ever your most loving,

"NORA."

Seated among the rich, confused harvest of her travels, Marcia Wynne read this letter. She laughed a little when she had finished it, and then suddenly the tears stood in her eyes.

"So I'm to begin my old trade again," she said. "I wonder nobody has recog-

nised it as a suitable occupation for a single woman. The gentle art of 'disenchanted everybody,' as Sancho Panza says. It's a noble *métier*, but, sometimes, I wish I'd never begun it in my early youth."

The appeal of Nora's nineteen years—"I am sure you can help me, Marcia"—was so fatally familiar. Now, there was nothing lackadaisical about Marcia Wynne, but the tears were undeniable. She looked about her rooms, with the brilliant disarray of bric-a-brac and Eastern trophies, and a sentence she had torn from a Bacon calendar that morning stared impertinently at her.

"For a crowd is not company, and faces are but a picture gallery, and talk a tinkling cymbal where no love is."

"Poor little Nora! You shall have it if I can get it for you," sighed Miss Wynne.

"Amblemere," she mused, glancing at her letter. "That must be the place whose praises Isabel Davenport and her husband have chanted so often. They must be of that happy fellowship who hold perpetual love-feasts around a central club-house. Isabel, I wonder if you've forgotten your many invitations for this summer? I dare say, but, nevertheless, for Nora's sake, and the love of adventure, I think I'll accept one or two of them."

And thus it happened that the London and North-Western express that night bore Marcia Wynne as one of its passengers. When that charming young matron, Mrs. Davenport, ushered her friend into the group about the fire, Miss Wynne, accustomed to finding friends in out-of-the-way places, was, nevertheless, a little startled to see among them two men whom she had formerly known very well—one of them under especially memorable circumstances. The other, a charming boy of twenty-three or so, just returned from serving his country in South Africa, greeted her with open arms. Indeed, he so occupied her attention for the moment that the first

man, who was taller and much older, with a face that had a certain distinction, put his hand out to Marcia across young Meredith's shoulder.

"Is there any chance of my recognition?" he asked.

"Of course!" she cried. "How do you do, Mr. Brockway? I'm lucky to find two friends when I hadn't expected one." He looked at her with eyes full of quiet admiration. To her they were the eyes of a man who had looked long enough at one face to be satisfied with it, and who desired to make no further excursions in the unknown. Four years ago he had told her he loved her, and she had sent him away sorrowing. He had gone then, bitterly hurt and disappointed, yet to-day his heart, apparently thoroughly and entirely whole, was offered to another woman. If Marcia had any doubts, after this meeting, as to the identity of Nora's correspondents, Mrs. Davenport dispelled them. From her conversation during dinner, Marcia gleaned that the devotion of Gordon Brockway to Nora Blackwood was only equalled by that of Dick Meredith.

"The trouble with the whole affair," said Isabel, judicially, "is that Gordon Brockway is reserved to a degree, whereas Dick Meredith runs to the other extreme; so they've kept the whole place guessing for a month. Since Nora's disappearance, we're hourly expecting one or the other to start in pursuit."

"Take a bone from a dog and what remains?" quoted Marcia.

"Not his temper, in Dick Meredith's case. He's a superbly good-natured boy," laughed Isabel. "You can't help loving him."

"Has Nora tried?"

Mrs. Davenport shrugged her shoulders. "I shouldn't say she struggled too hard." Then: "Marcia, you don't look a day older than you did four years ago."

"By which speech, my dear Isabel, I

know I'm no longer young." And Marcia followed her hostess out of the dining-room. She was barely thirty-two, but she felt a hundred years older than the youthful soldier, and toward Brockway like a timid school-girl. Time, Marcia saw, had done him nothing but good turns, besides having cured him entirely of his passion for her. Well, what did she expect? Surely not that Nora Blackwood would be indifferent to Brockway in the rôle of lover, had he chosen to play it? And yet—and yet, Dick and Nora were not such an impossible pair; Nora with her nineteen years, her gaiety and grace, coupled with a face that would infallibly attract a man.

Gordon was a man gentle to all women. In the old days, Marcia had told him, with a rather derogatory smile, his attitude was "charity toward all and malice to none." It was an attitude of provoking indifference, but Marcia had seen that he could be roused from it. Had Nora seen, too? Well, she would not be likely to forget it.

"One of these men has written Nora's letter, and, in due course of time, I should have no difficulty in finding out which; but it isn't the due course of time I can wait for. It must be now or never." Thus thought Marcia, lying back in the corner of the settle, an attractive enough figure in her black draperies.

She was roused from her reverie by the voice of Meredith, saying: "Isn't this a jolly log-fire? Think how we'd be panting and hanging out our tongues in town to-night! And here we are hugging this blaze." Marcia's chance came to her with sudden illumination.

"Oh, there are fires in town, too," she said, "for those who walk by the light of their own common sense, not by faith in the almanac! What you said reminds me of such an odd, little dream a friend of mine had, just before I came here. Do you care for dreams?"



## THE STORY OF A LOST SIGNATURE

It was Brockway she addressed.

"My own, no," he answered. "Other people's, sometimes."

"Listen to this, then," she said. "It's really rather interesting."

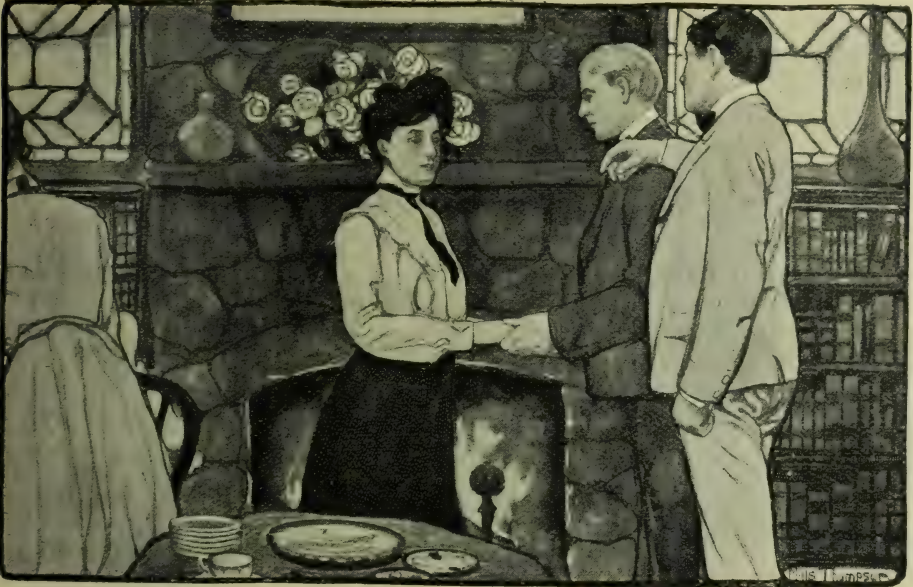
Brockway drew his rough, oaken stool nearer Marcia's settle, over the back of which Meredith was leaning. "It seems my friend dreamed," she continued "that as she came home at dusk one evening,

"Rash young person," said Brockway, "She should have first looked for the fellow's name."

"Should you have done that? Oh, but this was a girl!"

"I'd like to know," continued Brockway, "what a young woman would consider an impassioned love-letter."

"Well, she found it hard to describe; but she said the letter contained things



"IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF MY RECOGNITION? HE ASKED."

she was handed a letter that she hastily tore open and tried to read by the light of an open fire. Finding it impossible, she twisted up the torn scrap of paper and lighted one of the candles on the mantel. Then she read what proved to be a most impassioned love-letter. She declared the man who wrote it the only one she could ever love! Dick, you know the sort?"

"Written dozens of them," murmured Meredith.

"But," continued Miss Wynne, "what was her horror to find she had torn off the signature and made her lamplighter of it!"

you want the man you care about to say."

"How the deuce," remarked Meredith, irritably, "does a woman suppose a man knows what she's going to like!"

"I thought it was learned by long experience," said Marcia. "Besides, it was only a dream where the impossible happens so naturally you're never surprised till afterward."

"A girl usually has a pretty clear idea of the man's identity, I imagine," commented Brockway, looking into the fire.

Marcia nodded.

"So I said; but my friend disagreed. She'd had a similar experience only this

summer—two men in love with her. It seems she cared for one, and not the other, but the right one apparently was afraid to speak. Evidently, her dream grew out of the complication."

"A girl must know when a fellow cares for her," said a voice behind the settle.

Marcia did not look up.

"So the dream-man thought. I remember distinctly he said she *must* know, but he wished to tell her otherwise than on paper. She even got to his closing words, 'Faithfully yours!' Here the dream broke off short, with the lover's name committed to the flames. The girl said she was heart-broken; it was so realistic, but what can she do except trust the man will materialise and prove he's not the stuff that dreams are made of?"

Meredith had disappeared almost before Marcia's story was finished. Whether he was bored or irritated, she could not tell.

Brockway rose, and stood with his back to the fire. "Miss Wynne," he said, presently, "do you care to come out and have a look at the lake?"

"Oh! do Marcia," cried Isabel Davenport. "I do so want you to have your first glimpse of Amblemere by moonlight."

"Thou art the man!" thought Marcia, with a strangled sob in her throat.

"I should like it of all things." She smiled. "I had an idea it was dreadfully late."

"Oh, no, we hear the chimes at midnight here."

Just then, Meredith, in a white sweater, canoe-paddle in hand, appeared in the doorway. "If the lady-and-the-tiger business is settled, Miss Wynne," he said, "I'd like to take you out on the lake."

"Thank you, so much, Dick; won't the offer hold good for another night? Mr. Brockway has just suggested my going with him."

"I say, Brockway, you're altogether

too prevalent," said Meredith, good-naturedly.

"Come on, Mrs. Davenport; shan't we chaperon them?" Isabel, nothing loth, put her golf-cape about her shoulders, and followed the others to the boat-house.

Marcia felt an odd, little thrill of excitement as the boat pushed out into the charmed circle of moonlight. She lay back among the cushions and rugs, and fell to critically studying the face of her erstwhile lover—a difficult thing to do when one is in the thrall of the tender passion. Why, if she had not loved him long ago, should she now? But soft! This was Nora's quest and Nora's lover, and she must not forget the part she was playing. It was Brockway who first broke the silence.

"Do you know," he said, "it's very odd, but the last night I came out on the water it was with a girl who talked of you constantly."

"Really? I'm afraid she hadn't learned that another woman isn't the most interesting topic to a man."

"It depends on the other woman."

"Exactly," she said, as she thought to herself: "Brockway, I wonder if you are only a thorough-paced flirt."

"It so happened that what she said," he continued, "was distinctly interesting."

"I'm very glad; to be bored and in a boat it is so hopeless."

"You speak feelingly, Miss Wynne. I'm tempted to turn back immediately."

"Not on my account. May I ask who made me so interesting?"

"I've often wondered," said Brockway, drily. "Sometimes I think the Lord; sometimes, well, sometimes——"

"Don't particularise," she begged. "Yours never was a reverent spirit."

"Miss Blackwood is a most loyal friend," he continued.

Marcia was startled out of her composure.

"Were you testing her loyalty?"

"If mine is not a reverent spirit, yours



never was a trusting one," he replied, rather bitterly. "The years have not changed you, as I thought at first."

"What did you think at first?" faltered Miss Wynne.

In one swift moment he had struck the key-note of their old relations.

"I thought," he began, steadily, "what I've always thought—that you were lovely, but not for me; that you might

"A great deal."

"And you liked her?"

"Of course; everyone liked Miss Blackwood. I could always strike fire when I laid a finger, save in the way of kindness, on any one of your characteristics, and I often did it, just to hear her praise you."

"My dear Nora!" cried Marcia. "At least, she is trustful, and she is faithful."



"MARCIA FELT TO CRITICALLY STUDYING THE FACE OF HER ERST WHILE LOVER."

be tender, but not for me; that you trusted where you loved, but neither your trust nor your love were ever mine!"

"Gordon!" breathed Marcia, hardly recognising her own voice. He had pulled the boat in shore, in the shadow of the trailing boughs. She put out her hands, and drew a green, sweet-smelling branch down to her face.

"When I told you my dream-story," she said, "I thought it might mean something to you."

"So it did; but the fact that you were here, telling it, meant much more."

"You have seen Nora Blackwood a great deal this summer?"

"She is as good as she is beautiful, like the fairy-tale princess," said Gordon, gently. And he added: "Meredith ought to be a happy man."

The words dropped like so many crystals into the depths of Marcia's consciousness.

"Meredith!" she cried. "Meredith!"

"Yes. Why not? This lake is like a whispering-gallery, Miss Wynne. We shall have the boy holloaing to know what we want of him."

"I do want him!" she exclaimed, "to tell him that he not only ought to be, but is, the happiest man in the world, and to lose no time in making

Nora the happiest girl. Think of her! Dear little child, pining down there by herself, wondering if the man who signed himself 'Faithfully yours' is breaking his heart at this end. Was ever such a tragi-comedy?"

"Was I the man in the dream who had made the mistake of falling in love? It would have been a very easy one to make, if I'd ever fallen out of love with—the other woman!"

"Gordon, are you sure you aren't an irredeemable flirt?"

"My conscience doesn't accuse me. I only played foil for Meredith, and incidentally made things more interesting for Miss Blackwood. Won't four years of waiting win you, Marcia, or is it to be four years more?"

"Please row me back," she said. "I'm so tired to-night; so much has happened, and I want time to think."

\* \* \* \* \*

"A letter for you, Miss Blackwood," said the solemn butler as he presented his tray.

"Very well. Thank you, Parker." And the girl in the grey gown, with a bunch of mignonette in her belt, rose in somewhat undignified haste from the sofa beside the fire. She gave a quick sigh as she opened the envelope. "From Marcia, the dear, already! But post-marked Amblemere! What can that mean?"

"MY DEAREST NORA"—she read—"With this letter I'm sending you your lover, and that he is 'faithfully yours' you know by this time better than I do. Doesn't it seem strange that yours should be the hand to give me back my own? If I seemed too old for such frivolity, Nora, my heart is absurdly young and happy, and I mean to let it have its own way. I had mine for four years, and don't believe I liked it. Had you ever guessed that Gordon Brockway and I were more than friends long ago? Well, we were, and are again, with four years' lost time to make up. It isn't given to every woman to find the man

she left behind her still of the same mind. But this is what has happened to me, and you know, Nora, things happen rapidly in Amblemere. With all my love and congratulations to you and Dick, whom I've known since he was a boy, I wish you all the happiness that is coming to you, and more beside, and I am, as ever,

"Your friend,

"MARCIA WYNNE."

The hands that held the letter dropped limply to Nora's side. She looked about for an instant, like a child who is suddenly frightened and finds itself alone.

"Marcia!" she breathed. It was a cry for help—a bewildered, helpless cry. "Marcia! You and Brockway! Oh, it isn't true!"

Half an hour later the same solemn butler showed a broad-shouldered and peremptory young man into the tiny sanctuary, where his lady sat enshrined. He thought afterward he would never forget the fragrance of mignonette, and Nora's face in the halo of lamp-light. A street-organ, half a street away, was playing the sweet, well-worn strains of the "Intermezzo," from Cavalleria. Softened by the distance, it floated in to them.

He could never hear that air again, without feeling all the rest of it. And Nora? He went toward her with outstretched arms, but she stood, like the angel at the gate, and motioned him away.

"No—no!" she said. And then he saw that her face was all drenched with tears. "I had your letter," she began. "There is—you have been—it is all a mistake—"

But he took her in his arms, nevertheless, and she let him smooth her hair with his clumsy, tender touch. He comforted her like a child, and just then the strong arm and the soothing hand were what she needed. A strong arm and a kindly touch, even if they are not the right ones, are not bad things in their way, after all; and if something very



like tears shone in Meredith's eyes, no one was the wiser. He was filled with a hot, overmastering desire to kill somebody or something ; to bring to a swift justice the one who had wrought this havoc ; to twist the two wrongs into one right, and offer them up as a sacrifice to this slight, trembling, young thing that he held in the hollow of his arm.

"There, there, dear," he kept repeating. "I'm so sorry." Then, suddenly : "But, Nora, it's just a little bit hard on me, too, when I thought, you know I thought, ever since last night, that I was the fellow. I was an ass, and, of course, you didn't mean me ; but, all the same, I do love you."

She drew herself quite away from him and hid her face in her hands.

"It's you I ought to be sorry for," she faltered ; "it isn't anyone's fault ; thank you for being so good. I didn't mean to let you know—but I've just had this." And she handed him Marcia's letter.

"It's for both of us," she said.

He read it, with knitted brows, and crushed it up in his hand.

"They need never know," he said, sharply. "Why not let them think as they do? I did write your letter, and I am 'faithfully yours' as long as you want me. If you never want me any more than just that, I'll be just that until you can do without me."

At nineteen one doesn't consider the magnitude of such an offer ; but Nora took her hands from before her face and looked at Meredith.

"It's too good of you," she said.

He threw back his head on his square, young shoulders, and took her bit of a hand in his own.

"After all," he said, with a touch of inspiration, "you're only nineteen ; we've youth on our side, Nora. Is it a bargain?"

There was no sound but the snap and crackle of the fire and the strains of the, intermezzo, trailing off in the distance but Dick Meredith was sure he felt the hand in his return him ever so slight a pressure.

"Let's put up a good bluff," he whispered. "It's something to be hit by the same bullet."





'CARNIVAL time? But yes, m'sieur, such as it is, it is carnival. Pretty girls, gilded floats, clowns, and confetti, it is the modern carnival, but the spirit is gone. In the old time, ah, m'sieur, it was good to be young then, as I was, and be led a dance through a whirling crowd by the twirl of a cerise domino, or a lilting glance from behind a satin mask. Those were days—

"Another glass, m'sieur? It is joy, is it not, to sit in old Michel's cafetière, and watch the sun dance on the sanded floor, to dream, and drink his wine—it is good wine, this, from the valley of the Loire. See how it clings to the side of the glass like golden oil. Not the vile poison they sell yonder at Planchette's.

"Golden sunshine, golden wine, golden hair, golden coin. There is a magic charm in yellow, m'sieur. Ah, but there is. I know. Red is bewitching; it is daring, inspiring. But yellow—it enthruses, tantalizes, lulls.

"I saw fifty laughing, dancing, red dominoes flit by me that night, and stood at my post like a philosopher in brown until she came, in yellow. It was over in La Follette Square, where the fountain is, you know. The parade makes a turn south there. You will see it to-night.

"She turned her head and looked at me. I was standing on old Madame L'Hommedieu's steps. The wide stone

ones, with the griffin flower urns at the sides. One can see well from there. Twice I saw her. She came slowly while the others hurried. Her mask was three-quarters length. One could see only her chin and the curve of her cheek. But a chin, ah, m'sieur, like a pear it was, a little rounded pear, and cleft at the point in a dimple.

"The third time she passed, I followed. A burly clown lurched forward to give her ear a sly pinch, and I struck him aside, and put my arm around her. Protectively, m'sieur, merely protectively. And she shrank closer to me, and once when the crowd swayed roughly, she laid her hand on my arm.

"The Yellow Domino is tired?' I asked, wishing that I might see her eyes under the light.

"I have lost my way,' she said, softly. 'I seek a purple domino. It has a gold fleur-de-lis on the right shoulder, like this.'

"I saw that she wore one on her own shoulder, a purple one. One does not like such a blow at the first onslaught. To be told that one's enchantress seeks another. I was silent and piqued.

"Presently she spoke again. 'You must assist me to find him. I do not know my way. The lights are blinding, and the crowd is terrible. You were quiet and apart from it. I was sure you were old and kind.'

"I was just twenty-three, and my heart beat like a clapper in a firebell.



" 'I was to find him there, where you stood, beside the stone griffins,' she added. 'Let us go back to them.'

"A carnival rendezvous, and I the elderly, kind-hearted protector of the lovers. I laughed and pressed the hand that lay upon my arm. Reassuringly, m'sieur. But yes, and respectfully.

"As she laid the purple fleur-de-lis in my hand, I raised my mask and laughed down at her, and as I live, when she looked into my face, she gathered the yellow domino about her and ran from me, ran to Madame L'Hommedieu's steps, and joined the purple cavalier.

"And I ran, too. Who would not? They slipped into the crowd, this way



"THERE IS A MAGIC CHARM IN YELLOW, M'SIEUR."

The most respectfully. — And as we neared the stone steps, I saw the purple domino waiting.

" 'He is yonder,' I said. 'What reward is mine?'

"She hesitated.

" 'I have nothing to give you,' she said, softly, 'save this as a remembrance for your kindness.'

and that, and I after them. She knew too, for once she turned and saw me, and nearly fell, but his arm bore her up, and away they flew again.

"It is hard to run with confetti blinding you, and voices calling, here, there, everywhere, for there were bright eyes that knew Michel even behind a mask. Tall I was, m'sieur, and broad-shouldered,



"I RAISED MY MASK AND LAUGHED DOWN AT HER"

And she, the yellow domino, had called me old. I laughed and ran on faster. I would show her. They had turned a corner, and when I reached it, a fool of a Faust got in my way, and we both went sprawling. When I found my feet again, the two had vanished. Perhaps if it had not been for the chin I might have given her up. But a chin, such a little chin, dainty, and pointed, like Columbine's, in a Cherët poster—I would have followed it to the end of the world that night.

"For nearly an hour I wandered, and then at last I saw her ahead of me. She was alone, and I knew her at once. The yellow domino, the turn of the head, the piquant tilt of the adorable chin. She saw me, and did not run. And I laughed. She had tired of her purple cavalier. She remembered the face

behind the mask, the face she had thought old.

"Ah, it was a good face those days, m'sieur. The girls could tell you. Musette, and little 'Toinette, and Pourquoi Marie with the round eyes, and beautiful Mamzelle Marjorlaine, the L'Hommedieu heiress, even she has smiled at me from her carriage when I wished her 'bon jour' of a bright morning. Dead, m'sieur. All dead. Only little Musette. Where? My wife, Madame Michel. An angel, m'sieur, but somewhat stout. But a cook! Those patés you eat, are they not celestial? With a touch of tabasco they are better. A mere touch. So.

"And she led me on. The yellow domino, I mean. A flirt of her head, a shrug of her shoulders, a turn of her chin. Ah, how do they do it, m'sieur?



Voila! Those birds fluttering in the sand and the sunshine yonder. See the small brown one that coquettes with such grace. It is the same trick.

"And at last, when my legs ached, and I swore I would go no farther, she faltered, and I caught her, right in the shelter of the Josephine arcade, just in the shadow this side, close against the old stone wall, as if she thought I would pass on without seeing her. It was glorious. Just beyond the noise of the crowd and the confetti. I slipped off my mask and laughed down at her.

"Has the yellow domino no reward for one so faithful?" I asked, and she smiled back at me, and raised her face. In an instant I had slipped back the satin mask, and mon dieu, m'sieur, it was a boy!

"A beardless, laughing, pink-cheeked devil of a boy, who even as I stared at him in stupefied amazement, shouted out the story of my folly to the crowd, as he pirouetted out into the street like Harlequin gone mad. And they swept me along with them, and tumbled and buffeted me until I escaped into the square, and hid among the flowers at the fountain.

"But it was a woman before. It was m'sieur. The voice was low and caring. A woman's, I swear. And the hand on my arm. It was soft and small, a sea-shell of a hand, palm pink. I do not know. It is a mystery. Next morning, Musette gossipped over the morning-glory vines to me, and said that 'Toinette said, that at market it was said, that M'sieur le Maire's little daughter, Barbe, from the convent at La Therese only three months, had eloped with her sweetheart, the artist who comes to paint our carnival. And Musette said that Barbe's brother, the imp, Jules, was drinking their health all over the town, with a yellow domino thrown over his shoulder.

"I do not know. Still tongues are best. The domino was the same. There was the mark on it where she had torn off the purple fleur-de-lis for me. And such a chin! Ah, m'sieur, I saw Madame Barbe when she came back to claim her father's estate. It was a double chin then, forty years after.

"Another plate of patés, m'sieur, fresh and hot from the fire? Surely. Musette is calling. Ah, it was a chin!

"Coming, life of me."

## THE JOY OF LIVING

SHE smiles, but not because her gown  
Is rich, and not because renown  
Has come to him whose lot she shares;  
They have to struggle still; her cares  
No treasured vintage serves to drown.  
By musing sage and grinning clown  
She lightly trips, and all the town  
Is full of wonder at her airs—  
She smiles.

From her the fates withhold the crown.  
But yesterday they turned to frown  
Upon her dearest rival. There's  
Sweet triumph in the look she wears—  
One who was up and proud is down—  
She smiles.

# THE STORY OF THE INVISIBLE CAT

By RENÉ BACHE

*Illustrated by J. Enright*

THE circumstances under which I became the occupant of Ogle House were peculiar, and I frankly confess that I would have hesitated to move in had I been aware of its unpleasant reputation; for my wife was at that time in poor health, and anything likely to disturb her nerves was to be avoided.

However, my finances at that period had arrived at such a low ebb that the unexpected inheritance of the property by my wife, from an uncle who had so far disapproved of her marriage as to declare his intention to leave her a sixpence and nothing more, immediately suggested the idea of occupying it ourselves. Indeed, we could find no other use for it, inasmuch as the old manor-house was in such a condition of disrepair as to be unrentable.

I cannot help entertaining an impression that my worthy uncle by marriage was actuated by motives of malice, rather than of generosity, in leaving the estate to my wife. It had once been very valuable, but altered conditions made it practically worthless. He never occupied it himself, and from his point of view it was simply a burden in taxes.

The first difficulty we experienced was in securing a servant. Farmers' daughters in the neighbourhood, ordinarily available as domestic "helps," showed an indisposition to accept the employment I offered, and eventually one of them, more frank than the others, said bluntly that she "wouldn't work in no haunted house." This was decidedly enlightening, and led to inquiries which made me at length aware of the ominous repute of the establish-

ment. Nevertheless, we solved the servant problem eventually by hiring, from town, a very respectable woman, somewhat elderly, who declared that she was "afraid of nothing, from spooks to mice." To tell the truth, her statement only did her justice.

For the first few weeks of our tenancy of Ogle House we observed nothing that could endorse the supernatural reputation of the mansion. We were not disturbed in any way, and I decided that the reports on the subject were merely old wives' tales. My recollection is that more than a month elapsed before anything occurred to disturb this first impression. Meanwhile, we found ourselves fairly comfortable, though our supply of furniture by no means met the requirements of so large a mansion, and as a result one-half of the establishment remained empty, while we occupied the other half.

In describing a few of the phenomena observed in the Ogle mansion, I speak first of the moving lights, merely because they were brought earliest to my attention, and not on account of their importance. Indeed, at the present moment I have no more notion of their cause or significance than when I first observed them, and accordingly I will not attempt to enlarge on the subject, beyond mentioning that they were seen to shift at night from window to window of the untenanted part of the house, when watched from outside. As I ascertained from neighbourhood stories, they had been observed to do this for many years, and while the dwelling itself was supposed to be uninhabited. With the purpose of "laying the ghost," I explored on many nights the empty



rooms, but never did I succeed in capturing a "spook" of any sort.

The ghost of the late owner of the property was accountable for the disturbances, said the neighbours. He was, it seemed, a man of violent temper, and there were many reports of his cruelty, the most dreadful being the accusation that he had murdered his own daughter on account of a dispute with her respecting her lover, of whom he did not approve.

It may seem odd, in beginning an account of occurrences apparently involving intrusion by supernatural agency, to start with so commonplace a happening as the tumbling downstairs of my elder boy, who explained the accident by saying that he had tripped over a cat—a statement which, as I remember, rather surprised me at the time, inasmuch as we did not keep such an animal on the premises. My wife has always entertained that sort of horror of cats which, while unaccountable, is none the less a torture to those who suffer from it. The incident of the tumble might easily have passed without comment if it had not been repeated twice within the next three weeks. Children, of course, are apt to fall downstairs more or less frequently, and I would have been disposed to think little of the matter had it not been that it was always on the same flight that the boy fell, and each time he declared, with sobbing vehemence, that he had tripped over a cat. Obviously a child's notion, one would say, and as such I set it down; but I confess that I thought it very odd when soon afterwards my younger boy fell down the same flight of steps, and promptly declared that a cat had tripped him.

My elderly servant, Hannah, was of a very practical turn of mind. I never knew a woman of her class who had fewer notions than she—of the sort that arise from popular ignorance and misinformation. Often I found it advisable to consult her on important domestic

matters, my wife being at the time an invalid, and she always had sensible advice to give. Therefore, I was to some extent impressed by a communication which, one morning, she had to make about voices audible on the stairs. She declared that she was not in the least frightened, but that she had heard such voices on a number of occasions while on her way to bed.

A staircase, appropriately constructed, will serve the purpose of a whispering gallery, and I found no great difficulty in persuading the woman that what she had heard was merely an echo of voices in the occupied rooms. She appeared to accept this explanation, and two months passed before the matter was again brought to my attention. I was sitting one evening in my study writing, when at about eleven o'clock I heard Hannah's slippered footfall coming slowly up the stairs. It did not pass my door as usual, but paused, and presently she entered. I noticed that there was a peculiar expression on her face as she came in and put her candle on a chair, wiping her hands on her apron as was her wont when she had something of importance to say on any subject.

"Mr. Richards," she said, "there's something wrong."

"Something wrong, Hannah?" I queried, putting down my pen. "What is it, pray?"

"It's the voices on the stairs," she said. "I haven't wanted to bother you about them, and that's why I haven't spoken—barring what I said a few weeks back. But every night, coming up, I've heard the voices, and I'm sure there's something wrong."

I knocked the ashes out of my pipe, filled it again, lighted it, and gazed at Hannah with a profound attention. My conviction was that hers was a delusion of a mild type, to be treated with gentleness and consideration.

"Ghosts, eh, Hannah?" I inquired, soothingly.

"It's almost the time," she went on, taking no notice whatever of my remark, "and I want to ask you to come and listen."

"Come and listen where?"

"On the stairs," said Hannah.

I took a reflective whiff or two at my pipe, and then, laying it down, I rose and followed.

It is the pride of the reasonable man that he is open to conviction, and so I made a point of waiving argument with Hannah. She offered me evidence, and I was bound to listen to it. Accordingly I placed myself in her hands, though I had a very indistinct notion of what she would be at.

My study was on the third floor, in the rear of the house, and inasmuch as gas, in common with most of the other "modern improvements," as they are termed in the newspaper advertisements, was lacking in this "elegant country residence," I took with me one of the two small oil lamps which had been employed to shed light upon my literary pursuits, while Hannah carried her candle. We descended one flight of stairs, and paused at the landing. It was one of those huge, old-fashioned hall-ways, commonly found in country mansions, which seem to have been designed for the reception of guests rather than as a mere accommodation for the household ladder.

Hannah indicated that we were to stop there at the top of the first flight, and I acquiesced without remark. Argumentatively speaking, my position was purely passive; if the good woman had any evidence to offer, I was there to accept it and judge of its value. There was little doubt in my mind that she was labouring under a delusion, however, and this impression was strengthened after we had waited fully ten minutes in vain for something to happen. It seemed such utter nonsense that, eager to get back to my writing and my pipe, I was on the point of declaring my unwillingness to

pursue the matter further, when suddenly Hannah grasped my arm forcibly.

Her action was unnecessary, for as she did so I distinctly heard a sound as of whispering, which seemed to come from the stairs just below us. It was unmistakably a whisper by human voices—I could swear to that—and apparently two persons were speaking together, one hoarsely and angrily, and the other in terms of petition and deprecation. Some moments elapsed before I was able to make this out in detail, but I was sure there was no mistake; I could even perceive that one of the voices was that of a woman, while the harsh one was a man's. I have spoken of them as whispering, but it would be more correct to say that they were pitched in a very low tone, so as to be scarcely audible. Presently there was a dull and smothered sound, as if of something falling, and the voices ceased.

"That is the end," said Hannah to me, coolly. "Let us go back to your study, if you please, sir."

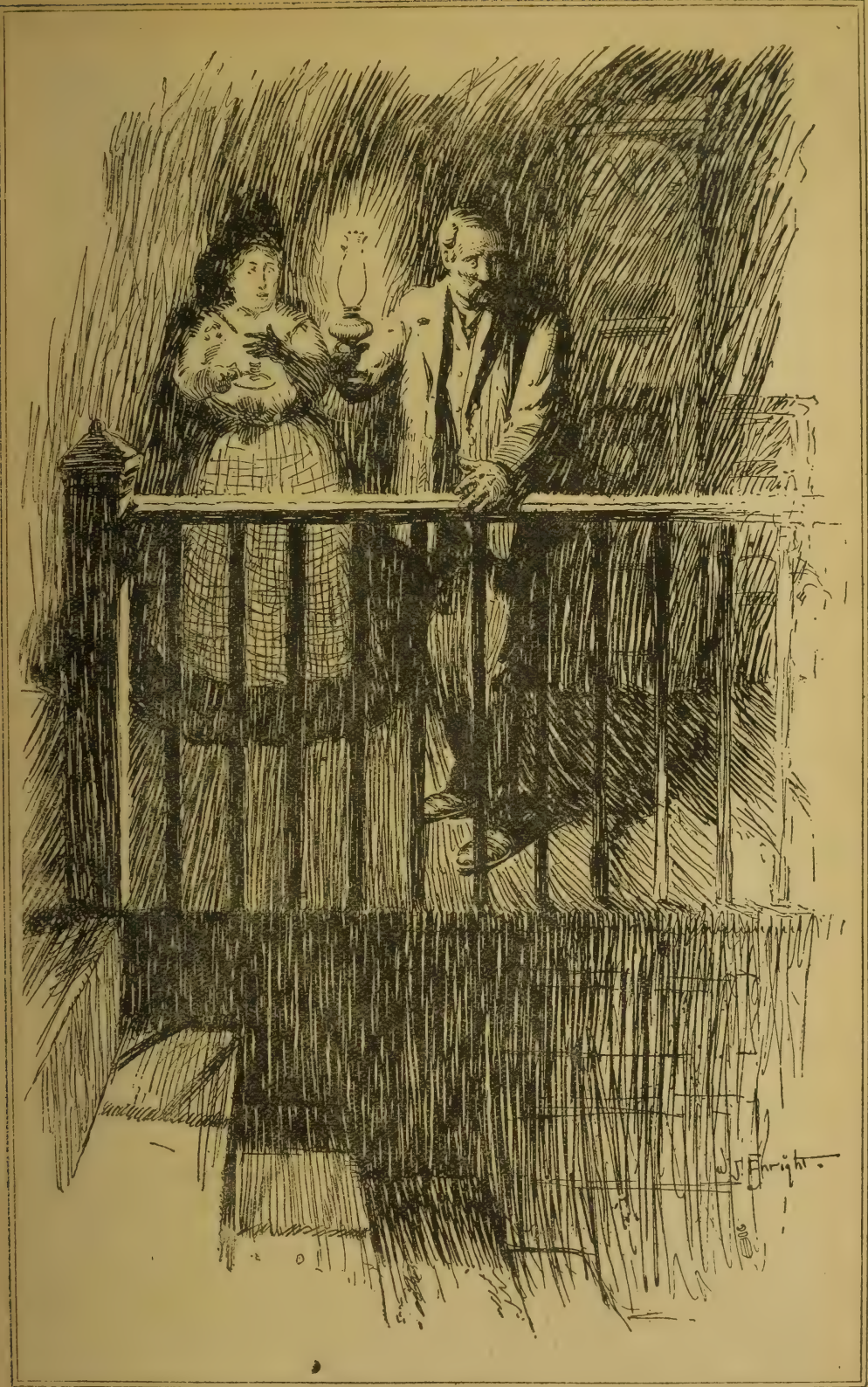
"I'm a poor sleeper, sir," Hannah explained, when we were once more in my den, "and that is why I go to bed so late. The whispering you've been listening to on the stairs goes on every night; it begins exactly at a quarter to twelve and lasts just so long. Then there is the fall—you know what I mean—and all is quiet afterwards. There's something wrong somehow, sir, and I believe it's a murder."

"A murder, Hannah!" I said, filling my pipe with fingers which I confess shook a little as I packed the tobacco into the bowl. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, sir, that there's been a murder done in this house, and the whispering on the stairs has something to do with it. Those were no living voices that we heard to-night."

I confess that I was upset. Indeed, I may frankly own that I felt a bit frightened. But I did not wish to





"THERE WAS A DULL AND SMOTHERED SOUND AS OF SOMETHING FALLING."

acknowledge my weakness to Hannah, and so I said, "It seems to me you are letting your fancy run away with you. Why should you suppose that the voices have to do with a murder?"

"You have heard the story, sir?"

"About the killing of the girl by her father?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have heard of it, as the local rumour, presumably unfounded. But what of that? It has no necessary connection with the matter of which we are talking."

Hannah eyed me shrewdly, as if suspecting that I was not speaking with entire frankness.

"Did you understand anything of what the voices said on the stairs?" she asked, abruptly.

"I thought I caught a couple of words," I admitted, "but probably I was mistaken."

"The words were, 'Oh, papa,' weren't they?"

I confess that this question startled me. While listening at the stairs, I had understood nothing of what the voices said except this very exclamation, which, as it seemed to me, was uttered just before the ominous sound that closed the whispered colloquy. Hannah evidently perceived that she had made her point.

"Good night, sir," she said, picking up her candle, and there our conversation ended.

I was inclined to scoff at the ghosts when I awoke the next morning. It was only about 6 a.m., but the summer sun was bright outside, and the birds in the neglected garden twittered merrily, seeming to invite an early ramble; so I made a hasty toilet, and in five minutes was ready to start. My wife slept in an adjoining room, and for fear of disturbing her, I walked on tip-toe. On the landing at the top of the lower flight of stairs I noticed two or three spots of tallow that had dropped from Hannah's candle when we stood there a few hours

earlier, and I smiled to think of my own fears, while determining mentally that I would find out what freak of acoustics was accountable for the voices of the night.

I was, I say, in the midst of these reflections, and had got about half-way down the flight of stairs, when my foot struck something and I fell headlong. I could have sworn it was a cat—the contact was of a sort hardly to be mistaken—and the first thing I did on landing at the bottom was to curse the beast in no measured terms. Luckily, I was only bruised, and the always-useful Hannah was presently at hand with various "first aid" applications. Being sound sleepers, the other members of my family were not aroused by the noise.

"Perhaps you'll believe it now," said Hannah, as she prepared a bandage for my injured ankle.

"Believe what?" I replied, with a grunt of pain.

"About the cat."

"What about the cat? I fell over a cat, and if I catch the brute, I'll wring its neck."

"You'll never catch it, sir," said Hannah. "It's not the kind of a cat that can be caught."

"Another of your ghosts, perhaps," I suggested. "A spectral kitchen pet, eh?"

The old woman disdained to answer my question. Looking me in the eye, she said, "Did you see it, sir?"

"See the cat? No, I didn't, but I felt it. I struck it with my foot."

"Half-way up the flight?"

"Yes, just about, I should think."

"That's where it always sits," said Hannah, calmly. "You were coming down close by the wall, and not holding on to the banisters."

"How do you know that?"

"Because the cat sits near the wall on the eleventh step below the landing and never anywhere else."

"Hannah!" I exclaimed, fairly losing patience, "what is all this nonsense you are talking? If there is anything



mysterious, explain yourself, and I will listen to what you have to say. I warn you in advance, however, that I have no sympathy with your superstitions."

She took no notice of the sneer, but finished tying the bandage about my ankle. Then, helping me to a chair in the dining-room, which was just off the stairs, she sat herself down and began her story.

"You can't depend for truth," she said, "upon everything that's said in a neighbourhood. But if you pick up a bit here and there, and sift out the idle gossip, you can get at some facts after a while. Now that's what I've been doing ever since I came here first. You told me yourself that the place was supposed to be haunted, and I wanted to find out what was at the bottom of the stories.

"The first fact I got hold of was that Ogle House years ago belonged to an old gentleman called Colonel Dee, who had one child, a very pretty girl, named Mildred. He was extremely fond of her, but didn't approve of the young man she wanted to marry. There was a bitter quarrel, and it is said that the young lady threatened to run away, but it so happened that she was killed by falling downstairs, and that was the end. The gossips said that her father knocked her downstairs in a fit of anger and killed her. Maybe it was a lie, but her own maid, who still lives in the village, has told me that it was the truth.

"The Colonel was a man of great influence, and nobody ever ventured to speak openly of the suspicion against him. But people avoided him, and by-and-by he became a sort of hermit.

"For years and years the Colonel lived in this great house alone, with no companion except a very large grey cat, which had belonged to his daughter. When, on rare occasions, he was noticed walking in his garden, the animal was always with him. The gossips said it was an imp of Satan in disguise, and declared that at night it carried the lights which moved about from window

to window of the mansion. Maybe the Colonel wandered from room to room, being unable to sleep; but he's long dead, and the cat, too, I suppose, and yet the lights are still seen."

"That's a very interesting story, Hannah," I said, as she paused. "As a raconteur you have developed a skill which surprises me; but I confess that I do not quite catch your drift. The Colonel killed his daughter on the stairs—I wish they had been the back stairs, and not the front stairs—and hence, I suppose, the voices we imagined we heard last night. But how about the cat? Are we to infer that the Colonel's cat has anything to do with my cat—with the cat over which I have just tumbled so disastrously, which, as I suspect, you have been entertaining in the kitchen, notwithstanding the strict orders I gave you that all such animals were to be rigidly excluded?"

Hannah's eye met mine, and I felt that she knew I was "bluffing." The fact is, that I was trying, with rather poor success, to conceal my own apprehensions. I was nervous about the cat business, and I had not forgotten the mysterious voices of the previous night.

"Well, Hannah," I said, at length, in desperation, "you know more about ghosts than I do, and I leave the investigation entirely in your hands. You may conduct it as you please."

"Thank you for the permission, sir," replied Hannah. "I shall send for the carpenter, then, at once."

"For the carpenter! What for?"

"I want him to do a little job of work, sir," said Hannah.

\* \* \* \* \*

At about eleven o'clock that morning, while busy in my study, I was disturbed by noises below, and went to see what the matter was. To my surprise I discovered a carpenter in the act of tearing up a portion of the lower flight of stairs, while Hannah and my two boys gazed interestedly at the performance. I would have put a stop to it, but remem-

bered that I had given *carte blanche* for an investigation, which evidently was now proceeding. I noticed presently that only a single step was being taken up—the eleventh from the top of the flight—but owing to the unusual width of the staircase and to the weight of the oaken slabs composing it, some time was consumed in the operation.

My first impression, when the step was lifted, was that there was nothing but a mass of dirt beneath. Hannah, however, pushed the carpenter rudely aside, and brushed away with her hands what proved to be a quantity of *débris* covering something more substantial, namely, a box, which was presently revealed as a carefully made case of hard wood, two feet in length by a foot in width. It looked curiously like a child's coffin, being painted brown and provided with metal handles.

By this time I had begun to take an acute interest in what was going on, and I remember that I was much surprised when the box proved to have no fastening whatever, a fact I am unable to account for in view of the valuable nature of its contents. The latter—I will say, to avoid raising the reader's expectation too high—consisted of eighteen hundred pounds in gold, done up in three small canvas bags, and a few small bones, which we overlooked at first among the dust that had crept into the little chest and partly filled it. In one of the bags of gold coin, however, was a letter, much yellowed and in parts almost illegible. It read as follows:—

“Contained in this box are certain moneys in gold coin, which I hide away with the idea that, at a future time, affairs may so arrange themselves, perhaps, as to render such a hoard extremely useful to me, my landed estate having become almost worthless. If I put these savings to no employment before my own demise, however, it is my wish that the sum shall become the property of any future owner of Ogle House who may

chance to discover it. This I say in order that there may be no dispute over it in case it is found. I wish here to state—and, being a dead man at the time when this testimony is read, I can have no object in speaking falsely—that the cruel reports which have been circulated, to the effect that I murdered my dear daughter, are without foundation, save to the extent that I did threaten her with upraised hand, for which may God forgive me; and, being alarmed, she started backward on the stairs, falling over her pet cat, which was clinging to her skirts, and breaking her neck. Being guilty in so far, and pride forbidding explanations, I have preferred to accept popular odium rather than condescend to defend myself against so abominable a charge. My feeling has always been that I cared not for the friendship or regard of anybody who would for a moment deem me capable of such a deed. As for the cat of which I have spoken, its body is buried in this box, beneath the eleventh step.

“ANDREW DEE.”

The signature was that of Colonel Dee, the former owner of the property, from whose heirs my late lamented uncle bought the estate, probably with the notion that it would again become valuable. This, however, proved to be a mistake, and so it came about that he left Ogle House to my wife. I was glad to sell the old place for a price very little above the amount of the mortgage. But the eighteen hundred pounds in gold was “lucky money,” as it proved, and I managed so to multiply it by a series of fortunate investments that the wolf has never barked at my door since I moved out of the haunted mansion, which was shortly after the occurrences I have related. I always thought that Hannah was entitled to at least a part of the treasure, but she never could be persuaded to take any of it. She died, fifteen years later, in my service.



## THE IDLERS' CLUB

By ROBERT BARR

*The Entente.* In the September Number of the IDLER, and within the sacred precincts of this club, I ventured the assertion that if each nation took the trouble to reach some appreciation of the humour of the other nations, the era of universal peace would set in. Having sent this statement abroad throughout the land, I then went abroad myself, because one ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory. On returning to England I find my proposition remains uncontradicted, so we may take it for granted that it is true. I suppose, however, that a great deal depends on the person who lays down the law. If Mr. Chamberlain had put forward the innocent theory which I promulgated, England would doubtless be in a frenzy of division over the matter; but of course the people of this country have confidence in me, and it is my earnest endeavour, by strict attention to business and a faithful study of the wants of customers, to prevent them from going elsewhere—to Birmingham, for example.

*The Weather.* But there was another reason which took me abroad besides the desire to spread the *Entente Cordial* over North-Eastern France. France appreciates the *Entente Cordial*, and many Englishmen return the compliment by appreciating the cordials manufactured by France, in spite of the fact that that country has expelled the monks of the Chartreuse. There had been a good deal of complaint about the weather in the early part of the summer, and having settled the question of our international relationships, I thought I would tackle the weather problem. By great good luck I got in my hay during a week of comparative sunshine, and

after the stack was thatched, I felt at liberty to pay some attention to the elements. It was raining so steadily that one could do nothing out doors, and so I had to take up some line of investigation, or else learn to play Patience, so I solved the weather difficulty.

*Weather-wise Remarks.* The first serial story published by the IDLER was written by Mark Twain, a dozen years or more ago. He began his novel by stating that he was not going to be troubled by weather in the writing of his book, so he lumped together all sorts of weather in the opening chapter, selecting the accounts of it from the works of various celebrated authors who were experts in this matter; then he wrote his story untroubled by thunderstorms or beautiful sunsets. Whistler said in his Ten O'Clock Lecture that Nature was rarely right, and during the summer that has gone there must have been many weather sufferers who agreed with him. Robert G. Ingersoll put the matter still more tersely by stating that if any man managed the weather so badly as Nature did, the outraged populace would take him out and lynch him. There is no doubt but that the inhabitants of this island have cause to grumble over the summer of 1903, but as they would grumble in any case, perhaps Nature thought it best to give them something tangible to growl about.

*How Weather is Made.* Weather is produced in this way: Nature takes a storm-centre that she uses as a top with which to amuse herself. She spins this top at times on the Atlantic, often with disastrous results in Western

America, and quite frequently along our own coasts. Sometimes this whirling tops spins right along across a continent and perhaps over an ocean, and we have learned so much about it that we now get telegraphic warnings of its coming. An electric message can always out-distance an electric storm, and the swiftest cyclone lags far behind the nimble telegraphic dispatch, and thus ingenious man uses Nature's own devices to defeat her, consequently Nature is continually breaking telegraphic wires with sleet and uprooting telegraphic poles with a tornado. But nevertheless, an agile man, with one eye on the weather reports and the other on a railway time-table, may dodge most of the big storms.

One does not need to  
*Move* be right in a storm-centre  
*Quietly.* to be made unhappy. The whirling top which Nature spins scatters discomfort around a very large circumference. The storm-centre takes the roofs off the houses, but the outskirts of the whirl merely fill the roofless rooms with rain. If one wishes to avoid these pranks of Dame Nature, it is well to go about the matter quietly, and not make a boast of intentions beforehand, otherwise one is apt to get drenched. This being the case, my departure was not chronicled in the London morning papers. My wisdom in thus keeping quiet about my intentions will be acknowledged when you compare the unfortunate experiences of Sir Thomas Lipton last summer, whose movements were chronicled by the press of the whole world, with the result that he and the *Shamrock* had bestowed upon them every sample of weather the world has yet seen, except the particular weather that the boat and the man desired. If Sir Thomas really wants that cup—and what is the use of being a millionaire in tea if you have not a cup to drink it out of?—let him slip a

burglar's kit into his pocket, depart unheralded to New York, quietly open the window in the Club House (and a jemmy will do that much better than a *Shamrock*), lift the mug, and come unostentatiously home. There is always a method for accomplishing an object if a man goes the right way about it.

I studied the weather  
*The Storm-* map during a howling  
*Centre.* - storm in London, and found that the centre of the disturbance was in Birmingham, while the damp skirts of Dame Nature's dress was spitting moisture from East Croydon and Westerham to the borders of Scotland. So I got upon the very fine and comfortable Folkestone express, and in less than an hour was basking in sunshine. Folkestone is a charming place, but the storm-centre shifted a little south of Birmingham, and next morning it was raining when I looked out of the hotel window. During breakfast I studied the weather map for the day, discovered that the large steamer with two funnels was about to cross to Boulogne, and so, after breakfast in the rain, I lunched on a terrace in France, where the awnings had to be drawn down to protect me from the blazing sun. I spent two happy days on the historic sands of Boulogne, and was watching the Nord Railway Company making up its excellent train for Paris, when to the west I saw approaching a dense curtain of rain. I took that Paris train, and, before we were half-way to the capital of France, we were in a smiling landscape. So I stepped off at Amiens, celebrated through all the world because of its—do not take the words out of my mouth; you were exceedingly clever to anticipate me by saying "its cathedral." I believe there is a church of sorts at Amiens, but I was about to remark that the town is celebrated for being the home of that great man Jules Verne, who has written more



stories that delighted us when we were boys than any other, except, perhaps, Captain Mayne Reid. Do not make any mistake about what distinguishes a town. It is never a building, but always a man. You are quite right in stating that Amiens is notable because of its cathedral, but still, the cathedral was the work of one man, or two men, or three men; I do not know at all how many it took to design that immense and beautiful building, but, however many it was, those are the men who conferred distinction upon Amiens, just as Jules Verne confers distinction upon it to-day.

—————

Once before in this town I called upon Jules Verne, but he happened to be in Paris, so I did not see him. On this occasion I called again upon Jules Verne, and looked up and down his house, which is quite an amazing building at a street corner, overlooking a park and, incidentally, the Nord Railway—not that the Nord Railway is a blemish on the scene, because they have made the steep banks of the excavation a veritable park of greenery, and the railway is rather an attraction than otherwise, in spite of what Ruskin would say. I do not know whether Jules Verne owns his house, or merely rents it; but those people who say that authorship is not a good trade should examine that dwelling. Whether it is owned or rented, it is a very sumptuous edifice, and I was pleased to think, as I gazed at it, that M. Verne had profited by his writing. M. Verne was not at home, but was away somewhere on the sea-shore, being soaked with rain, while I, in the beautiful sunshine, gazed at his sumptuous dwelling. There was a sign upon it, saying that this mansion was to let—I suppose for the summer season. I felt sorry for Verne, sitting under an umbrella, on sand or shingle, whereas his own garden lay in

all the charm of a sunlit summer; but that is the way we all do. The holidays come round, and we go elsewhere, forgetting or ignoring the fact that our own home is more beautiful than anything we see in foreign parts.

—————

I have compared Jules Verne to the late Captain Mayne Reid, but although

I have never met the former, I was a very old friend of the latter, and this mention of his name recalls a curious coincidence which happened during my early days in London. Mayne Reid lived in Ross, Herefordshire, and when he came to London, he nearly always put up at the Langham Hotel, which was in existence long before those large huge caravansaries were erected along the Strand and Northumberland Avenue.

Whenever he came to London in his later days he used to write to me, telling me where he was, and I spent many a delightful evening in his company. He had been all through the Mexican War, and the stories he told of that conflict were more than exciting. On one occasion he wrote me that he was coming to stay for some time in London, and so had taken a house, the street and number of which he set down. I have no doubt that by spending sufficient time I could discover what this street and number was, but all who know London are aware that there are many duplicates of streets and numbers, and when I come to write my reminiscences I shall discover the exact spot where Captain Mayne Reid resided on that occasion. Now this is what happened. I said to a 'busman:—

"Do you pass such-and-such a street?" and he said he did. So I got upon the 'bus and paid my twopence or threepence as the case might be. In due course we came upon the street mentioned, whereupon I got down. In

his letter Mayne Reid said he had taken a corner house in this street, and added that it had a delightful garden and a high wall. When I got down from the 'bus, I found that the corner house had a high wall, and doubtless behind it a delightful garden, which answered perfectly the description which Captain Mayne Reid had given me. I said to a policeman, because I wanted to be sure :—

"Could you tell me where Mr. Reid lives?" And he answered :—

"Do you mean Mr. Reid the author?" And I replied, "Yes."

So the policeman pointed to the premises I had already selected as the residence of my friend. Therefore I went through the gate without fear, and rang the bell at the residence which stood some distance back in the garden. I was admitted, and asked if Mr. Reid was at home. I was told that he was, and was shown into a room on the left-hand side of the passage. Waiting there some time an old slippered man came in, whom I did not recognise.

"Do you wish to see me?" he asked.

I rose from my chair and replied, "I have called to see Captain Mayne Reid."

"I beg your pardon," he said very frigidly, "I am Charles Reade." With which he turned his back upon me and left me there alone.

That was the only time I had the pleasure of meeting one of England's greatest authors.

Captain Mayne Reid had taken a corner house on a street of the same name in Maida Vale, some miles from where Mr. Charles Reade resided during his last days.

I spent a happy time  
*A City* in Amiens, because the  
*Set on a* weather was delightful,  
*Hill.* and because the Hotel  
 Ecu de France is one of  
 the best of its kind. In these columns  
 I have frequently reiterated my deter-

mination to mention a good hotel whenever I came upon it, and this hotel is one deserving of the highest commendation. But by-and-by the weather discovered me, and one morning the rain was descending on the Ecu de France, which I am told means the shield of that country. So I got upon a railway that Dame Nature knew nothing about, and sped southward to a place I had never heard of before, named Laon. There is a wonderful abbey here, and as one approaches Laon over the flat country the abbey and the town stands right out against the blue sky, for I had once more beaten the clouds in their race after me. Imagine a country as flat as the palm of your hand for miles and miles; a country where land meets the horizon as the sea meets it, and then fancy a hill rising out of this plain 600 or 700 feet high, and the top of this hill occupied by an ancient city with a tremendous abbey overlooking the whole land. Laon is celebrated for three things; first, for its abbey; second, for the fact that Father Marquette was born there (Father Marquette discovered the Mississippi. If it had not been for this man, born in a little French hill town, we would have had no Mississippi River); and third, for the fact that Laon possesses the very worst hotels in all France. One hotel bears the inscription that the cook catered for the British Ambassador in Paris and for Lyons & Company in London. I have never dined with the British Ambassador, but I have had tea at the celebrated rooms of Joseph Lyons and Company, so this man may have been the cook of the British Ambassador, but I doubt much if he stayed long at the Trocodero or even at the tea rooms of Lyons & Company. I stayed at Laon a day longer than I would have in any place down on the plain, because the storm was fumbling round the foot of the hill and did not get up to me. But presently it took the Funiculaire Railway and reached the heights, whereupon I



descended and made for the ancient city of Rheims, celebrated not for a man but for a jackdaw. ———

I had a good time and *The Town* lovely weather for more  
*of the* than a week at the ancient  
*Jackdaw.* city of Rheims, while  
Damé Nature was searching for me in the Vosges Mountains, which series of hills she knew I had a great predilection for. At Rheims they put together in bottles a sort of seltzer-water-edition of the juice of the grape. The cork comes out with a loud pop, and then the wine bubbles up. This they term champagne, and possibly if other nations knew more about it, a good deal of this fluid would be consumed. I was told on excellent authority that a quantity of this taken internally has a most exhilarating effect. There is a mystery about this town which I could not stay long enough to solve. Many of us have been in the habit of pronouncing the place "Reems," but the French call it "Ras," with the slightest suggestion of an "n" between the "a" and the "s," just as there is a suspicion of garlic in the soups and salads they make there. How they succeed in getting such a pronunciation from such a combination of letters, I was unable to fathom, because just as I got a good workable clue, up came the storm from the south and I fled to Paris, and while Rheims was being inundated I walked along the Bois de Boulogne, like the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo, watching people being sunstruck. I may sum up the whole matter by saying that I spent five weeks in France and never opened an umbrella, while citizens of London were taking canoe trips along the Underground Railway. So if you study the weather maps, it is possible to enjoy a tour in Europe even during the inclement season of summer, if you are reasonably alert and have money enough to buy tickets for the fast trains.

In that excellent and old-standing publication *S. R. Crockett.* entitled "Good Words," the distinguished novelist,

Mr. S. R. Crockett, has been writing a series of articles entitled "The Adventurer in Spain," and sprinkled throughout are many entertaining stories, including the following, which I clip from the September number:—

"There is another story—but there is nothing so hard to stop (except a brawling woman in a wide house) as a succession of stories. Once I lunched with a novelist and an editor, and after lunch it chanced that one of the party had an engagement, so that only two of us got in the stories we were aching to tell. They related to our boyish days, and were of a humorous and exaggerative character. It was the (other) romancer and I who were the successful competitors. But, in spite of an excellent lunch, the editor went away with bitter words on his tongue and a grudge in his heart. And he has (of course wholly without reason) slated all and sundry of our books since. And you can ask Mr. Robert Barr if this story is not true. He will, I know, back a brother up."

Mr. Crockett's confidence is not misplaced, *An* and I have much pleasure  
*Invitation* in corroborating his story,  
*to Lunch.* although it would be a brave critic who would slate seriously any of Mr. Crockett's works, for the novelist is more than six feet high and powerful in proportion. I think, if Mr. Crockett were to have a post-card printed and sent round to the Press, giving his exact height and the fighting-weight, he would find himself treated with even greater courtesy than is at present the case. As happened on the day he mentions, I shall now match his story with another, which concerns him, but the truth of which no one knows but myself and another man. This other man was a

successful publisher of rather peculiar character. In temperament he was either up in the clouds or down in the ditch, and frequently he fancied himself very poor, when in fact he was an exceedingly rich man. In these moments of fancied poverty he became of a sudden stringently economical. He had invited Mr. Crockett to lunch in London, and when the appointed day came round, he was in one of these fits of depression, and dolorously extended an invitation to me to join them in the lunch, so that I might possibly, by my bright and informative conversation, present to Mr. Crockett that intellectual entertainment which the publisher felt himself incapable at that moment of supplying. I agreed to do the best I could, and then the publisher said to me:—

“I am rather short of money just now, and I do not know Mr. Crockett very well, so I cannot readily explain the condition of things to him; but here is what I want you to do. I will invite you to lunch with me at the Cecil, but you protest vigorously, and say you know some quiet, better place that no one else is acquainted with, and take us round where we can have a cheap lunch.” I agreed to this, and gave him the information that many of the foreign restaurants in the Soho district were exceedingly cheap, and I expressed my willingness to delude Crockett into the belief that we were going there so that we might have a feeling of foreign travel about us. When we met Crockett the publisher proposed we should go to the Cecil, whereupon I at once said that we should be more

private if we went to some foreign restaurant near Soho Square. To this Crockett enthusiastically agreed, and so, despite the hypocritical protests of the publisher, we journeyed together to the quarter of the city I had indicated. Now, as everyone knows, there is one restaurant in the Soho district which is simply appallingly expensive; they charge you the price of a good meal for merely laying the cloth, and the pickings known as *hors d'œuvres* would alone find the bottom of an average purse. Here we sat down, and I have no hesitation in saying that from every point of view that lunch was a great success, and at the time I thought it worth the money paid for it. Mr. Crockett's conversation was more than brilliant, and we three thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, until the publisher called for the bill. An ashen look of horror overspread his face, and I got his stunned expression out of the tail of my eye, while I conversed very earnestly with Mr. Crockett. The publisher scribbled a sentence on the leaf of his note-book, which he tore out and passed under the table to me. The note was briefly: “Pass £5 to me under the table, and keep on talking to Crockett so he won't see what you are doing.” I happened to have a five-pound note in my pocket, which I slipped into the hands of the publisher, whereupon he jauntily paid the bill. As I have remarked, I thought at the time the joke was on the publisher, but, as he has never refunded that £5 to me, “I hae ma doots,” as the “Wee Macgreegor” remarks.







"THE BRUTE APPROACHES THE TRAP GENTLY, THEN SPRINGS UPON THE CARCASS."



# THE WILD BEAST TRAFFIC

By LAWRENCE PERRY

*Illustrated by Charles Livingston Bull*

THE stout German officer, whose uniform is as rusty as the hull of his vessel, meets you at the gangway, and when you express a wish to see the animals his weather-beaten cheek wrinkles into a curious grin, as he jerks his thumb in the direction of a small door leading 'tween decks. If you knew what was in store for you the officer's smile might be understood, but you don't, and perhaps it is just as well. You don't quite appreciate what it means to come in close proximity to some hundred odd wild animals who have been taken from their lairs over all Asia, Africa, and Europe; clapped into little box-like cages, shanghaied over land and sea to Calcutta or Aden, and from there transported aboard this bluff-bowed, walled-sided "hooker" to Hamburg. The trip on the tempestuous ocean, where they are tossed and flung about in their narrow prisons with never the sight of a human face save those of two keepers tends to make these beasts a trifle restive.

The roars and howls and growls and trilling bird-calls cease as the small iron doors clank back on their hinges, and you enter the compartment amid a strange, ominous hush, accentuated by soft, padded foot-falls and stertorous breathing. The faint light streams in through one of the partly opened hatches, but to eyes accustomed to the glaring light on deck there is nothing but the impression of a long, narrow black corridor, with the outline of many low boxes and great, shadowy Brobdignagian shapes. As you grow accustomed to the darkness you discern long rows of great, cat-like faces and

green eyes snapping with curiosity. Entering the aisle formed by the cages, it is well to keep a straight and narrow path directly in the centre, because only a foot on either side separates you from great fangs and ripping talons. The vessel is motionless, and the beasts lick their jaws as they detect the odour of the land which the strangers have brought. An elephant touches you on the shoulder with his trunk and you turn suddenly. Your overcoat flaps against a cage. Psst! A thick, tawny paw has flashed from between the thin bars, there is a tug, and the next instant a puma is snarling over some shred of your coat-tail. The keeper informs you that you must be careful of those animals, because some of the bars are so far apart that they can almost get their heads out. How are you to know that you are not walking straight into the maw of some great beast hidden in the blackness ahead! But nothing more serious happens that a blast of water from the mouth of a Siberian camel, which soaks you to the skin and nearly frightens you to death. It is all an experience that you do not quickly forget.

They are not essentially animal ships, these great German freighters, for, in addition to the consignment of wild beasts, they carry the usual general cargo, and the zoological part of the ship's company is not regarded with any special interest by the stolid Teutons who send the vessel out. Lion or cloth, machinery or tiger, it is all the same to them; they are all classified under the general name of freight, and there is no differentiation. Sometimes a part of the freight breaks loose and

causes strenuous moments for those on board. But when that occurs a keeper takes a rifle and pops away at the first pair of eyes he sees glaring in a place where they ought not to glare. After that the freight is skinned and the incident closed. Sometimes a vessel arrives with only a dozen animals. That is generally the case, but every now and then a steamship sails with a cargo of animals that the ark might have been proud to carry.

It is an immense business, this transportation of beasts caught fresh from the jungle, and the demand exceeds the supply by a wide margin. Nearly all the great cities in the country possess public menageries which are constantly buying new specimens of wild animals; quixotic individuals are frequently wanting cubs of one kind or another, ranging from tigers to bears; many wealthy persons maintain private zoological parks of greater or less extent, and the large circus companies must be constantly supplied because of the high death rate among their animals, a fact that speaks eloquently indeed for the hardships and cruelty the creatures undergo in travelling about the country. The circuses alone would keep the animal catchers busy. A large animal dealer imports hundreds of wild animals each year; for instance, the record of one dealer for the past year is twenty elephants, thirty-five camels, twenty tigers, five lions, forty-five leopards, twenty pumas, eighteen panthers, and any number of small animals and birds.

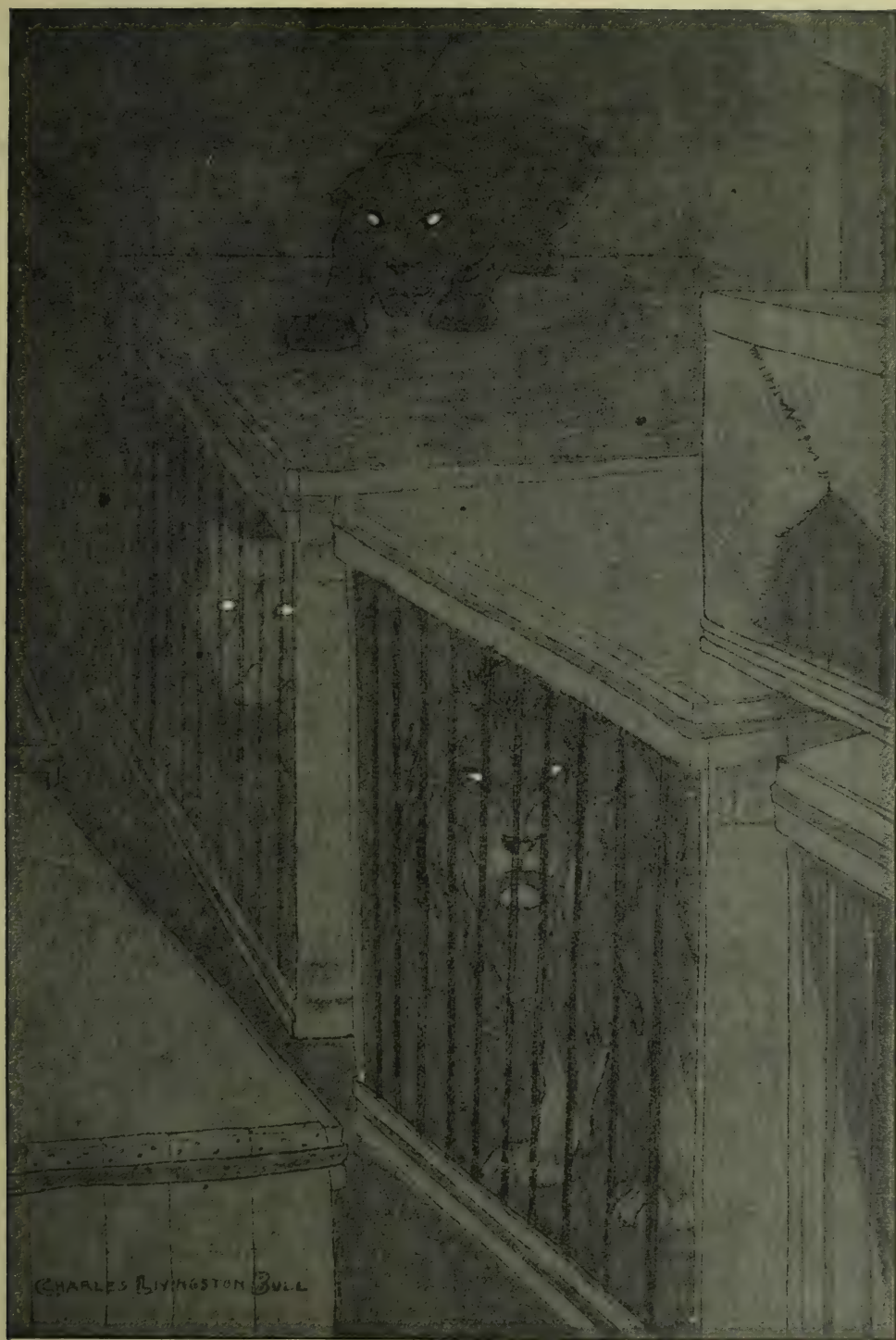
In America many of the smaller animals are sold as pets, and cubs—tiger, lion, leopard, and bear cubs—are in special demand by families in New York and throughout the country. They are reared and petted like kittens, but they invariably come back to the dealers at a quarter of what they sold for, or even as gifts. One eloquent letter which a dealer recently received from a woman who had purchased a lion cub the year before read as follows: "Please come

and take Kitty away. She has eaten our Newfoundland dog."

The animal business is by no means the smallest item in the great import trade of America, and yet the Government with its stringent regulations regarding the importation of foreign beasts has made it the least satisfactory for those engaged in it. When an American dealer receives an order for a hippopotamus, for example, he has to apply for a permit, which application amounts to the same thing as a request to be allowed to catch the animal. When the beast has been captured and is on its way to the States, another permit must be secured before it is allowed to land. In the case of a hippopotamus, however, the landing permit is almost invariably useless, for ninety-nine times out of a hundred the big beast dies on the voyage. Indeed, of late years there has been no success whatever in the transportation of hippopotami. Some years ago the Hagenbachs of Hamburg shipped seven, and by great luck one reached America alive. It was a male, and was consigned to the Central Park menagerie. Later a female specimen was secured from a small circus. The progeny of these two have supplied the zoos and menageries throughout the country.

Animal dealers keep expert animal catchers in all parts of the world, and the results of their work appear when the animal ships arrive. The Hagenbachs have established two collecting stations in charge of stationary representatives—one in Calcutta, and the other at Aden. To these distributing points the travelling representatives ship their catches, and when a sufficient number of animals have been gathered they are transported to Hamburg, whence they are sent to all countries of the world. From the wilds of the Amazon to the crags of the Himalayas expert animal catchers wander, seeking to fill the orders cabled from home. One firm have twenty-two representatives abroad at this time, all of them experienced in





"A PAIR OF EYES . . . GLARING IN A PLACE WHERE THEY OUGHT NOT TO GLARE."

trapping and shipping the wildest and most ferocious beasts. One of them is in Siberia on a camel chase, two are in Barbary looking for a black-maned lion, one is in the East Indies after a pair of tigers and leopards, others are in Morocco, Tunis, and the ends of the earth.

If an agent receives an order from his firm for a herd of elephants he organises a hunting party of over two hundred natives, equips them for three months and starts out at the beginning of the dry season, which in India occurs in December. When the herd is discovered the party stops about a mile away and two lines of men, each man fifty feet from his neighbour, start and meet on the other side of the herd, forming a circle sometimes six full miles in circumference. A fence of split bamboo and boughs is erected in the day time, when the elephants are not seen. At nights fires are burned and guns fired to keep the elephants from approaching the fence. Eventually men work inside the barriers and construct a stockade, or *keddah*, in one of the main elephant paths. There is an opening in the *keddah*, and on either side of the opening are built fences diverging outwards like a funnel. When the elephants go down this path the beaters, mounted on tame elephants, stampede them into this enclosure, then they are roped by the beaters, and when they become accustomed to being led about are marched to the shipping port. Elephants are never wild in the accepted sense of the word. If they were, no man on earth could capture them. In their natural state, too, trainers will tell you that they are not nearly so intelligent as they are supposed to be. The natives capture them in pits, a barbarously cruel method, by which more of the animals are killed or maimed than are captured. It is probable that fifty per cent. of all animals caught in this way are killed in the process. Very few full-grown polar bears or Russian black

bears have ever been taken, because with their great hulking strength they invariably kill or seriously injure themselves in their struggles to escape.

Tigers, and occasionally lions, are caught in pits. A great hole is dug in the jungle and covered with bamboo and grasses, and the carcass of a goat placed in the middle of the covering. The beast approaches the trap gently, and then springs upon the carcass. The trap gives way, and the great brute falls with it to the bottom of the pit. Then the catchers rush out and throw down nets over the struggling creature in which the frantic animal entangles itself hopelessly. Then nooses are dropped over the beast's head and shoulders, and he is pulled out of the pit by elephants, helpless as a house cat, till the yawning cage at the top of the pit encloses him for ever. Probably out of every ten tigers trapped in this way not more than four survive the process. Leopards, panthers, jaguars, and the like are caught in traps on just the same plan that we catch mice in our houses.

Ring-tail monkeys, one of the most valuable and expensive of the smaller animals, are caught in an interesting way. A cocoanut is split in two, and a banana with a piece of wood running through it placed lengthwise through the nut, the two halves of which are drawn together by wires. Then a hole is cut just large enough for the monkey's paw to enter. The monkey spies the tempting nut from his tree. He hops down, looks it over, sees the hole and smells the banana inside. He is fond of bananas. Putting his paw in he grasps it, but the wood prevents it from coming out. Then the catchers appear, and the monkey runs for a tree. But he cannot climb because of the cocoanut on his paw, and he will not let go of that, so he is captured pawing wildly at the tree trunk.

Zebras are caught in the plains of southern Africa. They are extraordinarily hard to capture and propor-





"THE REEFER RAISED THE HATCHWAY AS THE DECK ARRIVED."

tionately valuable, for a harness-broken zebra is worth two thousand pounds. That noble bird, the emu, is taken in Patagonia, by natives who use the South American lariat. This lariat consists of a long rope with three smaller ropes attached to the end. At the end of each small rope is a metal ball. This is thrown with great skill, and the balls twist around the emu's legs. The cassowaries, or horse-hair birds, are kept by the South American natives just as we would keep turkeys, but agents are obliged to pay a round sum for them. A hippopotamus, a crocodile, or a rhinoceros is not caught by the agents of animal firms, but is usually found in the possession of the Rajahs and other provincial rulers in Cochin China, Nera, and Siam. They keep them just as people in this country keep a kennel, and they love to show them off to visitors. Offer a Rajah a thousand pounds for one of the great beasts, and he will tell you that all the money in the world could not purchase the animal. After a while, though, if the potentate likes you, he will present you with a number of his unwieldy livestock. It is very evident that animal agents must have tact as well as courage and determination.

Snake agents are men of rare valour and resource. They handle a boa constrictor twenty feet in length as easily—or almost as easily—as they handle a black snake. It is in Sumatra that they capture the pythons, the largest snakes we have in our zoos, and they accomplish it without much difficulty. They generally wait, if possible, until the snake is gorged, when he may be relied on to lie dormant for three or four months, and during that time to care very little what is done to him. If the agent cannot wait for the snake to gorge himself, a box with the carcass of an animal in it is left in the jungle. The python butts the animal with his head, and then curls himself around it in the box. He is then secured and dumped into a bag or

into another box suitable for shipping. These great reptiles have no intelligence whatever. When one gets loose the animal man grips his neck with both hands in a peculiar fashion, puts his foot on him a little lower down, and has him under perfect control. But the grip has to be just the right kind of a grip, or the keeper's arm will be twisted off in the wink of an eye. There is one employé of a large animal firm whose speciality is snakes, and who is frequently called upon to go down into the holds of vessels arriving in port to recapture snakes which have broken loose. His fee is five pounds, and he has never yet failed to get the snake back into his box.

"When I locate them," he said, "I let them strike at me, then step aside, catch their neck in a grip, and it is all over." There are two great dangers in handling pythons in this way—either that they should coil around your body, or strike you with their bony head. In either case it is death sure and quick. Cobras are not brought here very often. No one touches those hooded terrors. They are handled with tongs.

Few lions are captured nowadays. It is cheaper to buy them in captivity, but lions and polar, grizzly, and Russian bears are the only animals largely bought and sold in captivity. Most wild animals are remarkably prolific, and there are plenty of them left all over the world.

When all orders have been filled the agents superintend the shipment of the beasts to a vessel lying at Calcutta or Aden, or some other port. From the point of capture to the point of first shipment, cages of tigers and leopards and the like are drawn in ox carts or loaded on elephants' backs. The agent's task is arduous. He must watch each one of his animals as constantly as ever a loving mother watches her children. On him is the responsibility for the loss or gain of thousands of pounds to his employer. The animal dealers lose about 20 per cent. of their importations

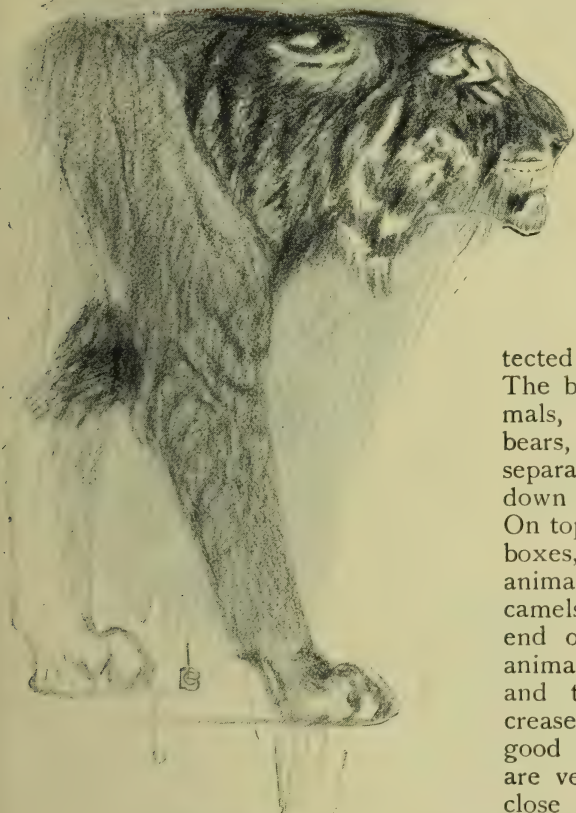


each year. The agent must know all their ailments and the remedies. He must have their habits at his finger-tips, and he must also possess cool, practical courage of the highest order. He goes

and for more reasons than the mere financial loss. If a lion dies, then a valuable agent on a camel-hunting trip must be shunted forthwith to Africa for another lion; or if the death be that of a tiger, the agent must leave all other pursuits and proceed to India. For all animals are ordered in advance, and orders must be filled.

The fact that no agent has ever been killed by his charges speaks volumes for the skill of this class of men, but it is only that constant display of power which keeps the animals in subjection. On shipboard the animals are invariably placed 'tween decks. The cages resemble medium-sized dry goods boxes, though of course they are of more stable construction and are provided with open fronts protected by thin steel bars and netting. The boxes containing the larger animals, like the lions and tigers and bears, are ranged in a double line, separated by a three foot aisle, stretching down the several hundred feet of deck. On top of these are placed the lighter boxes, containing snakes and other small animals and birds. The elephants and camels and deer are stalled at either end of these aisles. On the ship the animals are left to the care of the agent and two keepers. Responsibility increases now, for, although the beasts are good sailors and seldom sea-sick, they are very restive on the water, and the close quarters and putrid atmosphere renders them liable to disease. The python from Sumatra must be kept in a tropical temperature near the steam-pipes, the sick deer must have fresh goat's milk, the sick lion, or leopard, or tiger must have warm chicken blood at all sorts of odd hours, and thus it goes on.

The commissariat department is an important adjunct to an animal cargo. Most of the food is carried on the hoof,



A VALUABLE TIGER.

among the animals and cows them as if they were so many cats, and his rule is absolute. It takes a man of very dominant personality to do this. There is not a minute that he may relax while he is with the animals. He must always be to them the personification of force and power.

It is of the greatest importance that no big animal should die on the voyage,

Steers, lambs, and goats are stalled about the deck, and killed day by day to feed the animals. If the python is hungry on the voyage, he wants a nice little goat, and he wants it quick. A reeking haunch or a side of beef goes to the animals of the cat tribe, while an elephant will eat 700 lbs. of green fodder in twenty-four hours. Camels, giraffes, and zebras also like their fodder green and in large quantities. Monkeys like cocoanuts, and bananas, and corn, and such things. For the birds there are seeds. In fact, it is an elaborate menu which the animal chef provides each day, and no small item in the cost of shipment, either.

All animals are cowards, according to the agents. Unless a tiger or a lion, or indeed any wild beast has tasted human blood, he is quite ready to let you go your way if you will let him go his. In captivity, the agents say you may enter any cage provided you have your whip with a lead bullet on the end in your hand, and provided also that you know how to use it effectively. But the least lack of vigilance means destruction. You might tend an animal for years and have him know you well, but that would not insure you against an attack from him the first chance that offered. The lion is the only animal that is capable of affection. A few years of association with a lion, one agent declared, will in many cases insure you a dog-like affection, but even in a lion this affection may not be too greatly relied on. A leopard is the worst coward of all, and that is the reason why so many female animal tamers use them in their exhibitions.

The fiercest animals of all are the black panthers. There were two brought over in a recent shipment, their cages placed in a dark corner of the animal compartment and under some boxes of green parrots. So black were they that their bodies were distinctly outlined against the darkness that permeated the interior of their cages and their eyes

shone like balls of phosphorescent light. Red tongues writhed hungrily about fangs which looked like ivory stilettos. They were fury incarnate, and fairly banged their heads against the bars in their eagerness to get at the strangers who came by. So far as appearances went the steamship had nothing more deadly, nothing more venomous than these black cats. The agent confirmed this impression. They are the worst animals alive, he said. They have no fear; they are absolutely untamable; nothing can be done with them whatever.

Occasionally an animal breaks loose on shipboard and causes a panic and some little damage. The steamship *Bolivia*, with a large consignment of animals aboard, ran into a terrific gale in November, 1901. The cages are so arranged that as a rule it is absolutely impossible for them to overturn. But on this occasion a tremendous cross sea struck the vessel, which, heeling suddenly, toppled over a box containing one of the largest leopards ever captured. The top of the box cracked and the animal speedily ripped an opening through the boards. He was wild with rage and tried to claw his way into a tiger cage. This maddened the tiger and he struck at the leopard until the bars bulged out and the screams of the animals rose above the roar of the gale. The keeper raised the hatchway from the deck above, and the leopard, springing upward, ripped the man's coat sleeve off, and then, alighting, sprang on the back of an elephant. A terrific fight followed, and when the leopard was hurled to the floor by a blow from the elephant's trunk, the great beast was bleeding from a dozen big wounds and gashes. Then the leopard tried to get into a puma's cage, and while thus engaged was shot by a keeper. It took a whole day to quiet the rest of the animals.

There is no record that a lion or tiger or any of the great animals ever got



loose. When one does there will doubtless be a tragedy that will live long in maritime annals. Some months ago a puma got out by clawing the back of his box off. Somehow he gained the deck, but the sight of the ocean frightened him and he was easily tempted back to his cage, when it was brought on deck, by the display of a piece of meat inside.

Elephants sometimes break away when they are disembarking. It is seldom that they are lowered to a pier by tackle, contrary reports notwithstanding. Camels are lowered with tackle because of their long legs and the danger of breaking them, but elephants are walked down the gang-plank. They are docile enough as a rule, but are always liable to stampede. Such a simple thing as a fluttering piece of paper will start them, and once started nothing will stop them. They just keep on at a half lope which carries everything before it. Last year an American firm had taken two elephants safely down the gang-plank from a Hamburg freighter in Hoboken, and got them outside the pier when something set them off.

The next instant they crashed through the high fence which bounded the pier yard, and lumbered down Hoboken's main street just as though they were in their native jungle. They were chained together, but they made a perfect team and were soon lost to sight. The next morning they were found. They had tried to pass on either side of a telegraph pole, when the chain caught and prevented further progress, and they did not know enough to turn back. There was a stretch of ruined gardens and fences and other property reaching all the way back to Hoboken, for which the dealers, of course, had to pay handsomely.

You may hear all kinds of stories such as this on board these animal ships, and the keepers tell them to you and speak of their life as though it was the most ordinary and commonplace one in the world. It is not. There is not a keeper who does not bear the scars of more than one encounter with the ferocious beasts. It is interesting to hear them talk, and if you visit a vessel on which they are bringing in a menagerie, you will find them willing to take you 'tween decks and let you test your nerve.



# TALLY, THE COWARD

By JOSEPH KEATING

*Photographs by S. Timothy, Pentre*

THE fight could only be ended by the fighters. There was no one to interfere; no policeman reckoned Soldiers' Deep in his beat; and the fight went on. The calling of the other boy "Fatty" really opened hostilities. This was plainly a declaration of war—no matter what explanations wily statesmanship might suggest; and there was no great world-power at hand to offer arbitration. So the belligerents fought on. The fat boy snorted and pummelled at the thin boy; and both were covered with dust and gore and glory. It turned out afterwards that the issue of the combat was a false one and the whole fight a mistake—except in so far as it added another grave plea for international arbitration and the reduction of armaments.

The boys swayed and stumbled on the shining tram-rails underfoot. Their two lamps, taking opposite views, like their owners, shone from opposite sides of the roadway, pale and wistful; and looked rather sorry at having to take any part in this sanguinary business. Dust filled the roadway—the black dust of coal. If it were an ordinary road the dust might be blown away. But Soldiers' Deep was simply an item in the maze of working in the Cynon Colliery in the Taff Valley. The low timbers across the roof and down the sides twisted the shadows of the warriors into monstrosities.

The struggle became wild. Then the thin boy fell, and the fat boy fell upon him, shouting great victory and calling upon the enemy to admit defeat.

"Will you 'llow?"

"Lemme gerrup."

"Will you 'llow?"

"Lemme gerrup."

"Will you 'llow?"

"I never wanted to fight."

"What you want to call me 'Fatty' for?"

"I thought you liked it."

"Well, I don't. An' you'll have to fight for calling it, Tally, *bach* (little Tally)."

"I never wanted to fight."

"No, you'm too much of a coward. Will you 'llow?"

"Lemme gerrup."

"You 'on't run away?"

"No."

"Well, you can't fight, but you can keep your word."

The fat boy removed his bulk and the danger of suffocation from Tally.

Tally scrambled up. He at once took down his lamp and began trimming the wick with the pin that ran through the bottom to the burner. The light near his face showed large eyes, sorrowful, in a thin little face; his lips trembled; the lamp shook in his hands.

"What you shiverin' for?" said the fat boy, dusting himself. "You'm afraid of everybody. How's it you'm such a coward? You 'ont fight any of the boys."

"I don't like beatin' anything."

"Nor me. But you've got to do what I tell you Tally, *bach*. Now, which is it to be?"

"Do your work an' my own?"

"I don't care, I'm tired."

"How can I watch um both?"

"Easy."

"Your door's too far."

"Well you got to do it, or I'll punch you very hard. Now then; which is it to be?"

The heavy-weight champion neared Tally with hands and arms in a most





"AWAY WENT HORSE AND RUMBLING TRAM AND HAULIER."

alarming attitude of offence. "Which is it to be? Watch or wallop?"

Destruction seemed at hand.

"All right then."

One of the belligerent powers capitulated unconditionally. Might vanquished right.

"That's it, then. Why 'd'n you say so a long time ago?"

"What odds, so long as I say it now?"

"Look at all the sleep you've made me lose!"

The fat boy sighed and spoke bitterly. If his brightest hopes were suddenly blighted he could not be more keenly hurt.

"Wastin' time when I could be havin' a good snooze, Taliesin."

He grumbled still as he took his lamp from the side.

"Now mind you watch—or you look out."

"Oh, I said I'll watch um; so you shut up."

"No lip."

"All right, all right."

The tired boy went down the road a yard or two. There a big plank door kept back the air-current. He opened the door.

"Where you goin' that road?" asked Tally.

"I know a little *cwtch* (hiding-place) down here—a little bank where the dust is soft and I can sink in it as if I was in bed."

He described it with unction. His tastes smacked of voluptuousness.

The big door banged behind him. The current was rather strong against it; but, inside, the air was warmer, and this the fat boy liked very much. Whistling untunefully, he swung his lamp with a free hand, and kicked up as much dust as he could without going twice over the same ground. His light hardly made its way through the black clouds.

When he got to the little *cwtch*, he

was at the entrance to a road that branched off to the right called Vaughan's Level. This led into the Number Nine return, through which, after many twistings, the foul air returned to the upcast pit and went up again into the sunlight.

There was a hole in the corner of this entrance, and this was what he called his *cwch*. He carefully buttoned his jacket, climbed up the side into the hole and began to arrange for a pleasant interval.

"Ah-h!" he sighed.

He lay back. Then sat upright for a necessary thing. In order to ensure peace he must make it hard for anyone to find and disturb him. So with great cunning he rooted up a flat stone and put it in front of his lamp. But the light threw out side rays which could be seen by anyone passing. He took another stone and fixed it. Merely a glimmer from the slit between the stones could then be seen from the roadway. So that was all right.

"Ah-h!" he sighed again.

And he lay back in the dust, which, as he said, was so thick that it yielded softly under his bulk like a feather bed.

The light, hidden from the roadway, shone full into the hole and showed the boy's round black face taking on a calm, beautiful, merit-rewarded expression. His laziness reached that point where it looks beautiful. Yes; in him the sin of laziness was so natural that it had the charm of innocence. A seraphic smile—as if angels were whispering to him—came up to his lips; for he heard in the distance the sounds of labour—the rattle of trams, the jingle of harness, the banging of doors. He knew that Tally was working hard. Nothing but knowing that others were toiling while he reposed awhile could have made his joy perfect. He murmured his thanks drowsily and fell into happy slumber.

Rumbling sounds of the work went on. Poor Tally had a busy time. He kept faith, because it was in his nature.

He trimmed his lamp thoughtfully as the other boy left him. A shout of good-humoured impatience scared him, and the lamp nearly dropped from his hands.

"Am I goin' to wait all day to get through this door?"

Tally ran to the other boy's post, scurried past a horse and an empty tram with the haulier sitting on the crossbar of the tram behind the horse.

"Where's that puddin' headed wassy?" inquired the haulier, sociably.

"He'll come back in a bit."

"Come up."

The horse slouched on, the tram rolled and rumbled behind him, and the haulier sang a love-song hoarsely in Welsh. His lamp swung lazily from his right hand on the corner of the tram and threw monstrous shadows of the three upon the side and roof as the tram moved along.

Tally closed the door, and made another try at trimming his lamp. That was the sign manual of insignificance: to be always trimming your lamp. No self-respecting door-boy would be guilty of it. But Tally could never hope to be admitted to the really smart set.

"Hoy-y!" came another shout.

Tally scampered away to his own door. There, waiting, was another haulier, sitting on the crossbar behind his horse. He fumed with honest indignation.

"Look here, scrappin! If you don't look after your work better——!"

He did not finish, because the threat had neither harm nor meaning. He only wished to enter a protest against this kind of thing.

But Tally took it seriously. He shivered as he flew past the tram and opened the door.

"Come up."

Away went the horse and tram, and *this* haulier sang a love-song in Welsh, with his lamp swinging from the corner of the tram.

But before Tally really had time to





BORING FOR A SHOT TO BLOW OUT A "STIFF" BIT OF COAL. MOST EXPLOSIONS HAPPEN THROUGH SHOT FIRING.

close the door, a torrent of wrath poured down upon him from the other door. For another haulier lingered unwillingly.

Tally, his heart fluttering with terror, rushed up to the place, scrambled by the horse and plucked open the door, the haulier keeping up a strong commentary on the situation.

"Where's heavy weight?" The question was sarcastic.

"He—he'll be b-back in a b-bit."

"What you frightened about, you?"

"N-nothin'."

"Nothin'?"

"No."

The haulier pushed his lamp into the boy's face. There he saw distress and perspiration. The hurry had bewildered poor Tally.

"Nothin' the matter?"

"No."

"What you blowin' for?"

"Nothin'!"

"Where's that tired child?" (He referred to the fat boy). "Sleepin'

somewhere agen and wallop'in' you to watch the doors, eh?"

But Tally kept faith.

"I don't know where he is," said he quite truthfully.

"Tell him that when I come back I'll make him thin with grief," said the haulier.

He lowered his light.

"Come up."

And away went horse and rumbling tram and haulier. And this man also sang a love-song—only, in bad English and worse sentiment. He sang and vowed he would terrify the other boy when he came back. But the boy need not fear. That haulier never came back.

Tally quickly closed the door and ran to his own where more abuse poured over him witheringly. Another haulier waited at the portal.

"I hope," said Tally to himself as the horse and tram passed in, "that the journey is finished."

He meant by journey the string of

trams which go empty into the farthest workings and come out full to the bottom of the pit.

He closed the door slowly. Then there was a lull. So, like the insignificant door-boy he was, Tally at once began trimming his light. It hurt his big eyes; but, with his tongue out making endless twistings as he twisted the pin, he went on meddling, trimming and perspiring. The flickering light sent his shadow in great picturesqueness all over the sides, timbers and low roof.

"I never thought," said he, "that the journey'd be in so quick and so much of it come up here. I hopes all the em'ties is gone now."

His hope seemed safe. The lull continued. In the silence, little thin stones slipped down the sides, or became loosened from the top, and the timber creaked; while a few squeaking rats, quite ignoring Tally, came out and picnicked where the horses had spilled food (while waiting at the door), like pigeons at a cab-stand. The rats were not afraid of Tally; the wonder is that he was not afraid of them. No; the truth must be told: Tally had no courage to frighten or wallop anything. But he had the courage to keep his word. And the thing in him that interested me was this strange power of keeping faith—which, I suppose, is, after all, a sort of courage, if only spiritual.

The fighter still slumbered tranquilly; Tally, the slave of this fighter, still meddled with his lamp; and the silence held good for a while. Then came the thing that is always with us—the unexpected. But this time it was awful.

There came a roar as if hell had burst its sides and set free all the souls of the damned. No thunder ever tore into heart and soul like the horrible roll of this roar, that made road, roof, and sides tremble and break out of their limits.

"Explosion!" thought poor Tally, rooted.

Behind him the door burst open, and the other boy was beside him.

"Explosion!" he gasped.

Each boy, following the instinctive action in dark places, held his light to the other's face. The fat boy's eyes stared with terror; his loose cheeks quivered—big tears streamed down them.

Tally's thin face showed white under the dust, the large eyes looked larger; but he appeared less afraid than the other, who quavered:—

"What shall us do—what shall us do? We'll be burned—all of us."

"Don' cry," Tally said, with pity.

"Let's run—run."

"Where?"

"Anywhere—out to the bottom."

"P'raps that's where it is coming from."

"But I'll chance it."

Yet the big boy seemed afraid to go alone.

"Come quick, Tally," he pleaded.

"We might run into it. Stop a bit."

"No, no, no! Let's run—run anywhere, only run."

"No good in that. I'm frightened enough. But no good runnin' into it."

If Tally had knowledge he would have run. But he was only a boy. The other had not the courage to face it alone. So he roared pitifully, and clung about Tally like a child to its mother's skirts.

The roof and sides groaned and the timber cracked under an abnormal strain. From this it could be seen that the explosion was not far away. Yet there came neither dust, fire, or suffocating gas as yet.

"There it is!"

"No; that's a light. Somebody runnin' this way. Good job we didn't run out."

The light came rushing towards them—not swinging, but held firmly. A strong hand carried it.

The light turned up the road





IN THE "FACE." HERE THE COAL "GROWS."

leading to the big boy's door, and disappeared.

The boys began to run towards it. But it came swiftly back and met them in Tally's road. They recognised the fireman who had charge of the district. Before they had a chance of speaking—

"Where's the boy lookin' after the other door?" he said with great composure.

"Here he is, Evan."

"Now, boy, you are big and strong. Will you have the pluck to stand by that door for a bit?"

"I'll be burned!" cried the big boy, sobbing hard.

Evan raised his lamp and looked at him.

"My boy," said he, very quietly, "that door must be closed after anybody comin' through. The men rushin' out for their lives 'ont think of shuttin' it, an' if it's left open it'll spoil what I got to do to save you all. You are to tell everybody you see to get to Number

Nine return—not the main road or they'll be suffocated. Understand now—Number Nine. Do this an' you an' the others will get home safe. If you don't—then you'll run into the gas and die. Quick. Go to that door."

The boy had no control over himself. He obeyed the quiet command: he went up to the door.

"Tally," said the man, "I want you, too."

He put his hand on the boy's shoulder and took him down Soldiers' Deep to Tally's own post.

"Come inside this door."

He opened it. They stood inside.

He held his light to watch the boy's face to say the last word—the last word that meant everything.

"Look, now, Tally." He spoke very slowly; but there was fever in the man's words: he wanted to be away to the danger, but his plan depended upon this door of Tally's in the centre road-way. "They don't think much of your

courage about here. But there's some-  
thin' in you, or I'd have told you which  
way to run out. I'm goin' to send the  
fire up this road an' you are to send it  
back—not to let it get too far—while  
the men run up the way I'll show um  
inside here."

Tally trembled. His eyes stared at  
Evan.

"Send the fire back?"

"Look, now. I'm goin' to do some-  
thin' to the doors farther in. This will  
send the fire up this road towards you.  
But when you see it you are to open  
this door. Then you'll see it goin' back  
again. The wind will blow it back.  
Just inside this door is Vaughan's Level,  
as you know. Send everybody you see  
up there to go out by Number Nine  
return. You'll do this?"

Tally still trembled, but he looked  
willing to obey.

"All right," he said.

"Good boy. I depend on you. Min'—  
don' open the door till you see the fire."

"No, no."

"I hope God will bless you, Tally.  
And, boy—pray for me; 'cause I haven'  
got time."

Then Evan ran into the inner work-  
ings, to juggle with doors and air-  
currents and trick death, that prehistoric  
beast, of the really gorgeous dinner he  
had spread for himself. Of course, the  
fireman knew every trick and turn of  
the doors, windways, main roads, and  
disused lanes. But in all probability he  
would on his way in meet death, who  
would quietly take him by the hand  
and lead him down the one lane that  
had no turning. This he knew. But  
he faced it calmly. It is astonishing the  
calm and courage of these colliers: the  
brilliant bravery of the plain, humble  
men. I suppose you find some of the  
finest examples of manhood in these  
obscure places. But poor old human  
nature has a trick of growing the bright-  
est flowers in the darkest corners of its  
garden. This man, Evan, rushed on:  
his action hot and swift; his thought

slow and cool; holding his little lamp  
with a firm hand—like his presence of  
mind—its light guiding him safely  
through the shadowland. His thought  
was not at all of himself, but of the  
small boys he had just posted in danger  
at the doors to help him make his  
plan good.

"Poor lads! P'raps they'll be cinders  
when their mothers see um agen."

This, too, a few minutes afterwards  
was what young Tally thought, when  
he saw what he was on the look-out  
for. The bottom of the Soldiers' Deep  
—about two hundred yards down the  
road—was full of the terrible fire.

In a trance-mood, the boy opened  
the door. The fresh current poured  
down the deep, and Tally could hear  
the roaring of it as it rushed furiously  
at the fire. All the timber in that part  
was ablaze. That burned red. But on  
on top of the red fire—near the roof—  
was the blue-tinged flame that had  
started the mischief. Tally looked down  
at the fire, as if it were a wondrous fire-  
dragon out of the stories. He wondered  
how long it would take to come up and  
eat him. He wondered if Evan had  
walked into its mouth.

He saw that it came no nearer since  
he opened the door.

"Evan said I was to send it back,"  
said he. "I didn' think I was clever  
enough to do it. I never knew wind  
could beat fire before."

The boy, fascinated, stared down at  
the fire, listening with awe to the roar  
of the wind and the red and blue flames  
fighting for the right of way. The wind  
pressed onward. The fire could not  
evade it by stealing around anywhere;  
the roadway was too narrow, and the  
wind met it at all points. So back  
slowly the fire was forced.

Then Tally heard the cry of the other  
boy.

"Oh, let's run away! Let's run away!"

Tally remembered then that the other  
boy had come to him in terror. He  
pleaded that he couldn't stay by him-



self. He grovelled before Tally, imploring him to run with him.

"Go back to the door, as Evan wanted," Tally answered, and he stood beside his door, looking at the flames.

But the other boy had fallen into the dust. His terror made him senseless. Now he had recovered so far as to be able to implore Tally again to run away and leave doors to shut or open themselves.

"Only run away—only run somewhere!" he cried.

"Evan'll be back soon," Tally said, still staring down the Deep where the fire glowed.

Tally placed his faith in Evan. The boy could not understand the design one bit. But he did his part. He was like a good man before God. He did what seemed right, leaving the rest to the controller of the scheme.

The scheme in this case was simple. The coal came out of a myriad of places. But of these three were important. The accident happened in the extreme left of these three roads. Down this road the air-current had to go and pass around to the upper workings along the face of the coal. In order to send the air down this road, the other two branches—the centre and the right-hand—had doors at their entrance. The wind blew against these two doors, and they turned it back down the left-hand road. In the centre road was Tally's door; the one on the road which branched off about fifty yards away to the right was the other boy's. Now Evan worked his plan inside; the air should run down the left-hand road till he had manipulated the inner doors to stop the air from going into the upper workings. He knew the fire always travelled with the air. Consequently, as soon as he stopped the air from going as usual into the higher places, it had to find another way. It could not go back, so he knew it would rush up the centre roadway and carry the fire with it. Then he depended upon poor Tally to

open the door, let in the fresh air, and drive the flames back. In this way he would confine the danger entirely to the spot where it broke out.

For on the right, just inside Tally's door, was Vaughan's Level cutting into the upper workings. The wind would keep the fire back below this opening, and this opening would take everyone who could get to it safely into the Number Nine return. Once in there the men could always keep ahead of the flames and poisonous gas—even if the fire got in there. It could not travel quicker than the returning air, which in a return is sluggish. The men could rush to the bottom of the pit, quickly up, and—safety.

But on the other hand, if, instead of getting into the return, they blundered trying to get to the main working road they would have to pass through the fumes of the treacherous choke-damp, and—suffocation.

This was why Evan wanted Tally's companion to remain at the door of the upper road—that door should be kept closed. All the air should be driven down Soldiers' Deep as soon as Tally opened his door; and the men coming out of the upper road should be warned to run back down Soldiers' Deep, cut into Vaughan's Level, and into Number Nine return.

But the boy who was a great fighter neglected his post.

They saw lights flying wildly out of that road.

"Run an' tell um—run—tell um come down to Vaughan's Level, here!" cried Tally.

"I'm afraid—I'm afraid!"

Tally put a stone against his own door, and this held it open.

Then he ran with wonderful speed after the lights. He dashed into the front of the men, shouting:

"You're to go down Soldiers' Deep—through Vaughan's Level—and back by Number Nine, Evan said."

The authority of Evan was con-

vincing. At once the men turned to run back down Soldiers' Deep. But they saw the fire down there. They stopped aghast.

"No; you fool!" they shouted. "You want us to run into the flames."



THE PIT HEAD.

"It's below the mouth of Vaughan's Level!" cried Tally.

They understood the meaning of this, and they cried joyfully:—

"Vaughan's Level—Number Nine return—and safe home boys!"

And down towards the fire they rushed.

"Come on, Tally!" they shouted.

"Evan'll be back soon," said he.

One wanted to drag him away.

"No," said he, freeing himself. "I'm all right. I'll stop an' tell the others."

Then he was alone with the fire; the other boy had run away with the men.

Tally ran back to that other boy's door in the upper road. It stood wide open. As the fireman expected, the excited men forgot to close it; and the boy had deserted his post. The air was blowing down that road and spoiling the life-saving plan. Tally closed the door, and rushed back to his own.

Some men came staggering up from the left-hand road, where the fire had broken out. They had forced a way through the deadly choke-damp; but they could never have escaped if they blundered on. Tally rushed up beside them.

"You must go up through Vaughan's Level to the return!" he shouted.

They did not seem to understand. They reeled onward. He caught hold of one and led him down. The others followed unconsciously. He led them to the mouth of Vaughan's Level.

"Up to Number Nine!" cried he.

They seemed to understand that—in a drunken way; and they shuffled along the road.

More men rushed out from the upper road then, and were given the secret of life. They all wanted Tally to come.

"I'm goin' with Evan," said he.

They knew Evan. They believed the boy knew what he meant by waiting for the fireman. So they left him to watch his door in Soldiers' Deep. There, at the bottom of the road, lurked the red fire. But Tally was too busy to heed it



Others came and went. Then the rush of men stopped. He wondered if they were all gone.

"I hope they are," said he.

He felt numbness take hold of him, and the boy wondered.

Now, what was happening was no matter for wonder. With the rush of air down the centre road, the left-hand road was almost airless. There the gas-fumes found no opposition. So it crept up and up, till it touched the air going down the centre road. The choke-damp mixed with the air, and the current gradually took this poisonous gas down to poor Tally, who inhaled it and grew weak. At the same time the gas took away from the resisting force of the wind, while it strengthened the fire. Then, in the same way, as the choke-damp crept up the lower road, so did the fire slowly creep up Soldiers' Deep to where the boy was posted.

"I don't care if I do get burned now," said he.

The influence of the gas made him indifferent.

"I'm goin' to have a sleep," said Tally. "I don't care if the fire comes."

He stretched himself upon the dust. His lamp burned faintly beside him. He closed his eyes, muttered a little, then only heavy breathing came from him.

The red and blue fire came slowly up the Deep, slowly reaching the mouth of Vaughan's Level. When it passed that there was no more escape for anyone.

But Evan had timed the thing as

near as human calculation could do it. So his light—steady and firm as ever—came out of the upper road. It rounded the corner and came swiftly down to the door of Soldiers' Deep. He had been all round the upper workings, guiding, like a shepherd, bewildered stragglers into the right road. He stopped beside Tally's light. He bent over the boy, and shed the light of his own lamp upon the lad's face.

"Ah! Tally, *bach* (little Tally). Just in time. Where's that other boy who was such a fighter? Run away? And Tally—that the boys said was a coward—is at his post. I thought I could reckon on you more than the fighter. They're all saved—that is from the upper side," he said, correcting himself. "God help them that's down the lower side now. But if you *machgen-i* (my dear boy) didn't do what you promised—the nine times ten of the men would be where the other ten is in the lower side now."

He picked up the boy's lamp, hooked it to his own belt; then took up Tally in his arms.

"Come you, *machgen-i*. Vaughan's Level is open for us yet."

And carrying the boy, Evan went swiftly towards the fire, turned into the mouth of Vaughan's Level, to the return, back to the pit-bottom; and soon they were up in the daylight. And with the sun upon his face and the hillside breeze in his lungs, Tally awoke from his dangerous sleep and opened his eyes to life.

## FLORAL HEAD-DRESSES

By MRS. WILSON WOODROW

THE blossoms in her hair! They are all a part with youth and sentiment, love and laughter. Then, suddenly, we note that

yesterday has slipped into to-morrow — that "Gillian's dead, God rest her bier," and that the garlands are withered; but the roses still shake their perfume above the tresses of the maids of to-day.

Floral decoration for the hair is as old as coquetry. Eve probably exploited its possibilities to the utmost, and the serpent doubtless whispered that her wreaths and festoons were only half the feast—the bonbons or the appetiser. Some wicked old cynic once said that she ate the apple in order to obtain some clothes. Having that final coquetry of dress (the blossoms in her hair), it was naturally but one step to the off-setting costume.

And what a simple little trick it seems—this rose in the tresses; but it has its intricacies, its meanings, its consequences.

"The girl who twines in her soft hair  
The orange-flower with love's devotion,  
By the mere fact of being fair,  
Sets countless laws of life in motion."



"WHITE ROSE OF WEARY LEAF."

When a man thinks of his first love, he remembers her always with the rose of eternal youth in her hair, or the "jasmineflower in her fair young breast"; and, for him, "she is not dead, and she is not wed," and the withered rose-leaves crackle in an old letter, as from his heart he pays his tribute to his lost youth: "Oh, the faint, sweet smell of that jasmine flower!"

The arrangement of flowers in the hair is not wholly a matter of sentiment, however; it is an art. The blossoms may be

the last touch to a faultless toilet, at once its crown and its epitome; for the flowers should merely be the final expression of the fresh, exquisite, harmonious whole.

Properly chosen, what may not a flower express? The aloofness of sanctity, the essence of coquetry.



Some one has said that it is every woman's ambition to be either a great saint or a great beauty; that she has only two spheres—passion and sanctity. The flower in her hair may easily define her sphere. The daughter of Spain lays a crimson rose in her dark locks, casts a mantilla over it—half revealing, half concealing its warm, red invitation—flutters her fan, and the havoc is wrought. The rose allures, invites; the mantilla hints of reserve and mystery; the fan woos and repels; and man—proposes.

How different is the effect of the waxen camellia laid against the smooth hair of the maiden of a colder climate. It possesses a placid charm; it serves as a reminder of gentle, peaceful, well-ordered days; but it arouses no primitive desires in the unregenerate, masculine heart to capture and possess.

To attain this art in its perfection, there must be an innate feeling for it.



"EVERYWHERE THE DAISIES SMILED."



"PANSIES FREAKED WITH JET."

The woman who would wear daisies in her hair with a costly lace gown and rubies has no music in her soul, no appreciation of beauty, no sense of the eternal fitness of things.

A wreath of daisies in the hair, or even a single blossom, must express simplicity—simplicity of costume and appearance. They are rustic little flowers, breathing of the fields and meadows, and should only crown the childish face, the loosely-arranged hair.

Flowers have as distinct personalities as people. I remember still the shock it gave me when reading the history of one of Augusta J. Evans' gifted and accomplished heroines, to have her appear, in one of the scenes of the book, with a pure white hyacinth twined in the blue-black masses of her hair. Reader, as the novelists of the eighteenth century would say, picture to yourself a woman



"THE EYE OF DAY."

with a hyacinth in her tresses! As far as grace went, she might, with equal taste, have adorned those blue-black masses with a feather duster. Thereafter the tale was ruined for me. Through every situation the heroine walked with that stiff stalk of hyacinth sticking upright in her hair. In the love-passages, it insisted on falling over one eye; in those depicting grief, it tumbled sideways over one ear. What matter if she spoke like Madame de Staël, or looked like Helen of Troy? Her heroinely fascinations were gone for me.

A heroine famous for the flowers in her hair was Zenobia of the "Blithedale Romance." She never appeared without one gorgeous exotic tucked in her black tresses. And, in his reference to this blossom, Hawthorne seems to use it to

emphasise the effect of her character, creating in the reader's mind the impression of a nature strange, passionate, and alien, always making the flower appear as the outward and fitting symbol.

Tennyson also uses the same motif to give an impression of appearance and even of environment, as in his poem "Lady Clare." When Lady Clare discovers the deception that has been practised upon her, and that she is usurping the lands which belong to the rightful heir, she exclaims:—

"Pull off, pull off the golden brooch,  
And cast the diamond necklace by,"

thus giving the impression of renouncing—casting aside her state and splendour.



"RICH WITH THE SPOILS OF NATURE."



Then she fares forth to tell the true lord  
the tale of her lowly birth :—

"She clad herself in russet gown,  
She was no longer Lady Clare,  
She went by dale, she went by down,  
With a single rose in her hair."

When Lord  
Ronald sees her,  
he exclaims :—

"Why come  
you dressed  
like a village  
maid,  
That are the  
flower of the  
earth?"

By that phrase,  
in conjunction  
with the single  
rose in her hair,  
Tennyson has  
made his desired  
impression with  
subtlety and  
precision. A  
wreath of roses  
would have  
hinted at state  
and opulence,  
but the single  
rose proclaimed  
her at once be-  
reft and at once  
the flower of the  
earth.

Do we not  
grasp something  
of the nature of  
Pauline Bona-  
parte when we  
read of her  
scant, cobwebby  
costumes, of her  
sandalled, beau-  
tiful, bare feet, of the bands of leopard-  
skin, and of the vine-leaves and grapes  
in her hair? The pipes of Pan rang in  
her ears, the cymbals of the bac-  
chantes clashed! She must image the  
untrammelled, the free. She exulted

too greatly in her pagan loveliness to  
hide from the gaze of man all of that  
Phryne-like beauty.

The priestesses of the sun seized the  
materialisation of the rays they wor-  
shipped and bound yellow flowers above

their brows;  
and, with their  
gift of exquisite  
symbolism, the  
Greeks ex-  
pressed almost  
every emotion  
and every im-  
pulse by means  
of the floral  
chaplet. What  
could have been  
devised more  
truly suggestive  
of spring — its  
passion and its  
poetry — than  
those process-  
ions of violet-  
crowned youths  
and maidens,  
trooping, with  
laughter and  
song, through  
the shady groves  
of the Antio-  
chian Daphne,  
to lay their frag-  
rant offerings  
at the altar of  
Love?

Violets, how-  
ever, are singu-  
larly adaptable,  
and can be worn  
with any kind  
of a toilet. Al-  
though the in-  
signia of royalty

since the days of the first Napoleon,  
they are also the flowers of senti-  
ment. The woman who pins a clus-  
ter of them in her hair hints at an  
unvoiced sensibility, of what Mallock  
calls "woman's last charm—a grief, but



"BARBARIC PEARL AND GOLD."



"I COME TO PLUCK YOUR BERRIES,  
HARSH AND CRUDE."

never a grievance." It is a tender sentiment, softening sorrow without bitterness. For her, the violets seem to voice an appeal. "Despite the hard glitter of diamonds on her breast, she has a heart."

The maidens of Samoa twine their hair with garlands and festoons of blossoms. It is the eternal aspiration of the eternal feminine toward beauty — that desire to render themselves fair, which is the "soul's emphasis" of the daughters of Eve. It is their temptation and their strength; by it they reign, through it they fall.

Roses are a law unto themselves. Not always have they served as Beauty's chaplet alone. At the splendid banquets given by the Romans, there were wreaths of roses provided for the guests, in deference to the current belief that their fragrance dissipated

the effect of the fumes of wine; but no matter to what use they may have been put in crowning the brows of befuddled senators, they are still the flower of youth. None but the young and beautiful should wear them.

A woman should have a charmingly poised head set upon her shoulders, with grace and distinction, before she may safely adopt a head-dress of flowers. There are certain sleek specimens of the coiffeuse's art which look well with a flat arrangement of leaves or a tiny garland, but to stand the ordeal of a floral head-dress, and not present a bizarre appearance, a woman must possess beauty of a picturesque and effective order.

The young woman pictured in these pages, who has daringly wreathed her head with morning-glories, understood perfectly the



"COLD SEA-BLOOM."



unwritten laws of the floral head-dress. She was aware that one of the most graceful and exquisite of sprays on its native vine would have a very different appearance when twined about the feminine head. It could only be beautiful with a costume and a manner of dressing the hair which would aim at flowing effects. As the picture stands—the bodice, of soft, falling chiffon; the unbound hair; the haughty face, crowned by the loose spray of morning-glory — it is poetic, suggestive of the “happy morning of life and of May”; but fancy how the picture would have looked had the young woman worn a conventional gown and smoothly coiffed head!

Instead, she knew enough to follow the suggestion of the flower. All the lines of the spray were loose, flaring, springing; and the girl who elected to wear it, must, in costume and arrangement of the hair, adopt the same lines, produce the same effect. She must, in a word, express the flower which adorns her.

The use of the floral head-dress in portrait photography of pretty women has never been fully utilised. It has

infinite possibilities. By the deft arrangement of flowers in the hair, results may be achieved which will procure a wonderfully picturesque and charming photograph, as is shown in the illustrations accompanying this article.



“THE MORNING-GLORY’S BLOSSOMING.”

Some of the delicate wide-petaled blossoms in the hair and on the breast give a delicious butterfly effect, or a young woman with a classic type of beauty may bind the more massive flowers above her brow, and resemble some stately, mysterious priestess of the temple of Isis.

Balzac assures us that a plain woman may make her lack of beauty as fascinating and attractive as a pretty woman’s loveliness. Perhaps he is right; but the

woman who accomplishes this feat must be an artist to her finger-tips. She must instinctively understand all the harmonies and subtleties of colour and drapery—what points are to be insisted on, what to be ignored. But the photographer’s art is not quite so difficult. It is a poor photographer, indeed, who cannot take a beautiful picture of an ugly woman.

Is she a trifle Japanese in appear-



"A FIRE OF FLOWERS."

ance? Then let him pose her so that the

"Shadows of her rich brocade,  
Lights of gold thread overlaid,  
Gorgeous, glowing as her name,  
Fall about her, standing there,  
Cherry-blossoms in her hair,  
Chrysantème."

Is she indefinite and colourless? He can make her appear strange, shadowy, ethereal. With plenty of gauze drapery and water-lilies in her hair, she is an unearthly, enthralling Undine—limpid-eyed, pale-faced, lulling, and restful.

One of the accompanying pictures represents the delicate, cameo-like profile of a beautiful young woman, her loose hair covered with light blossoms,

and the result is most attractive; but should she appear thus at a dinner, for instance, she would be considered ridiculous, as Ophelia-like as her appearance indicates. Poor Ophelia, twining the blossoms in her hair, singing her pathetic songs! It was the feminine impulse to make herself fair which still actuated her disordered brain.

There is a difference between the decorative use of flowers and jewels. A woman fortunate enough to possess beautiful jewels may adorn herself with them in any sort of a way, and they will excite admiration; for they are permanent, and represent value. Now, flowers have no intrinsic value to speak of, and are extremely perishable. Consequently, the woman who wears them at all must use her artistic sense and the tact of the toilet in their arrangement.

Floral head-dresses at best belong to youth or to radiant, young matronhood. The cheeks they bloom above must be as smooth as their petals. Console yourself with your rubies and diamonds and emeralds, mesdames; the roses are not for you. They are as transient as your lost teens.

Among the peasantry in various parts of Europe it has always been a custom for the young girls to wear coronets and wreaths of flowers on certain occasions. Tom Moore speaks of "The young village maid, when with flowers she dresses her dark, flowing hair for some festival day."

In that sentimental mid-Victorian era, when "Lucille" was the poem of poems, when maidens wore long curls and floating, velvet riding-habits, flowers were much in vogue for the hair. Then



it was the lover's proud privilege to twine those blossoms in his lady's locks.

"The roses I, at times, would twist  
To deck her hair, she oft forgot."

And again the fashion of the times is mentioned :—

"There's a high-born lady stands  
At a golden mirror, pale . . .  
Where her maid is weaving roses  
For the ball, through her dark hair."

A heroine was not a heroine in those days if flowers were not clustered in her hair. The poets of that era were for ever harping upon the custom :—

"But sweeter still to choose and twine  
The garlands for that hair of thine."

It is said that the language of lovers is always and universally the



"DEEP VIOLETS YOU LIKEN TO  
THE KINDEST EYES THAT LOOK ON YOU,"



"THE VINEYARD'S RUEY TREASURES."

same, and this must be true ; for in how many, many different novels has Edward whispered passionately to Angelina : "Give me the rose in your hair." It is always a definite scene in works of fiction of a certain type, occurring as regularly as the heroine's sprained ankle or the hunt ball.

With the survival of the modified early Victorian styles during the last few years, the custom of wearing flowers in the hair has, to a certain extent, been revived, especially among English beauties. Some very famous ones have worn the wreaths and half-wreaths of roses,

and one great lady has set the fashion for a flat wreath of ivy-leaves, which is very pretty and becoming to some faces.

For a number of years those who love the faint, delicious spring-time violet, and consider that a woman's costume is refined and rendered more attractive by a cluster of these flowers, have had the pain of seeing their favourites massed into a huge, unsightly ball—a round bouquet of immense size, which resembles nothing so much as a cauliflower. These monstrosities women have worn on their bosoms, or at the waist, accepting apparently without protest a vulgarly ostentatious and un-beautiful fashion.

If the adoption of floral head-dresses means that women are to adorn themselves further with such excrescences, let us trust that they will never be considered good form.

In case the custom is revived, we can only hope that les femmes du monde will employ the services of a professional floral hairdresser. If there should be a great demand for the services of such a functionary, he might in time achieve as

much fame and fortune as the noted French salad-maker in London, who drove from house to house in his well-appointed brougham, and who, alighting, was followed into the mansion

by his footman bearing his monogrammed case of condiments.

The floral hairdresser of the future may look his subject over and say: "Ah, Mad'moiselle, you shall interpret a 'frühlings lied.' Here, Gaston, the primroses, the narcissi, the snowdrops"; or, "Madame, you shall be a picture after Watteau—all airy delicacy and exquisite colouring. Gaston, the sweet-peas and forget-me-nots."

Bret Harte pictures for us one of his characters—the fascinating Maruja. I think—with a wreath of purple artichoke-blossoms surrounding her dainty head. It sounds very kitchen-

gardeny, but the flowers are beautiful, nevertheless.

When one sits down seriously to think of wreaths and festoons and garlands, what pictures rise in the memory! Here is a long series of Queens of the May, all in white and crowned with flowers. Her attendant maidens of the



"GLOWING GHOSTS OF FLOWERS."



Ephemeral Court are likewise decked and wreathed with blossoms. A merry, joyous, innocent picture.

And then, before the mental vision, appear the shepherdesses of La Petite Trianon, with their festooned, beribboned crooks, their gilded milking stools, their panniers and their high heels; and encircling the white tower of their powdered hair are tiny flat wreaths of flowers.

But there is one class of women who are debarred the chaplets and the nose-gays; who must, perforce, forego the perfume and beauty of flowers, eschew them as they would poison — and these are the singers. Any flowers of strong fragrance have an almost immediate effect upon the voice, and violets are specially inimical to its quality.

There is, I believe, a perfectly well-authenticated case of a young prima-donna, who was to make her *début* at some important private musicale. The hostess had a large bouquet of violets in a vase upon the stage, not knowing the peculiar effect of perfume upon the larynx. The young artist advanced and

opened her lips; but no voice came. It was as if she had temporarily been struck dumb; and, bitterly disappointed, she was forced to leave the stage.

It was, at first, considered an attack of hysteria; but her physician diagnosed the case differently, and claimed that her difficulty of utterance was solely due to the effect of the strong fragrance of the violets.

The wreath is a symbol of power, whether it be the floral tiara of a Theodora or a Cleopatra, the laurels of a Zenobia, or the slender rose-garland of a Queen of the May. From it sprang the enduring crown of gold and jewels, emblem of conquest and empire; but the frail, perishable chaplet of flowers is the symbol of a yet wider

dominion—the power of beauty.

And, looking at the matter from a wholly philosophical standpoint, has woman been wise in discarding, to the extent she has, this outward and visible symbol of her empire? May it not be that the present inclination toward a more liberal use of flowers, for the purpose of adornment, is, to some extent, a return to truer gods?



" . . . DAFFODILS  
THAT COME BEFORE THE SWALLOW DOES."

The intense ambition for simplicity of attire, engendered by golf, and tennis, and hunting, and all the mannish pursuits which woman has taken up in the last quarter of a century, has led us far afield. Few there be who would now willingly revert to the days when heavy boots were an abomination, and the short skirt—comfortable monstrosity that it is—an undiscovered requisite. Yet, is it not possible that, in discarding our curls and our flounces, we have, in a measure, lost with them something all women—no matter what they may say—prize above comfort and independence, aye, above rubies: the admiration and reverence of men?

Woman never seems to learn or to

appreciate that man, far more than herself, is a creature of sentiment; that, as Agnes Repplier puts it in one of her essays, "he feels more wistfully the subtle charm of association, and has far more sympathy than she for the dear, faulty, unlovely, well-loved things of his youth."

It is a matter for congratulation that the woman of to-day would refuse to give up her untrammelled freedom of attire, her blouse and easily-arranged pompadour for the hoop-skirts and the elaborate frizzes of an earlier period; but would it not be wise for Fashion to compromise a little in her dictates, to grant, as a sop to Cerberus, a revival of the pretty and graceful custom of dressing the hair with flowers?



"EVERY HYACINTH THE GARDEN WEARS  
DROPPED FROM SOME ONCE DEAR HEAD."





# THE BALLAD OF SERGEANT ROSS

By JOSEPH MILLS HANSON



**T**HE south wind's up at the break of dawn  
From the dun Missouri's breast,  
It has tossed the grass of the council hill,  
And wakened the flames on its crest.

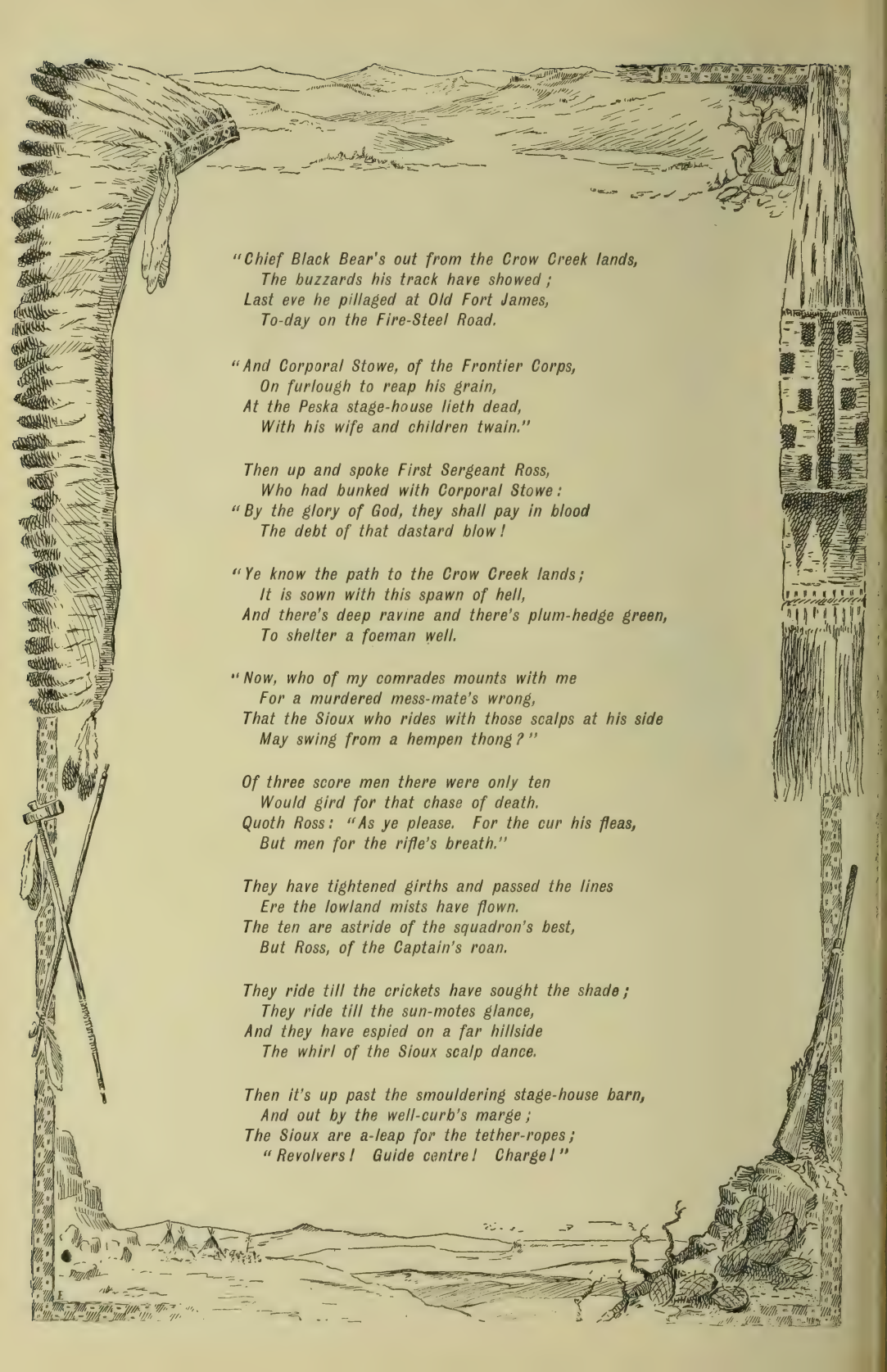
The flames of the sentry fires bright,  
Ablaze on the prairie's pale,  
Where sixty men of the Frontier Corps  
Are guarding the government trail.

A rattle of hoofs from the northern hills,  
A steed with a sweat-wrung hide,  
And Olaf Draim, of the Peska Claim,  
Swings off at the Captain's side.

A limb of the sturdy Swedes is he,  
Who harried in days of old,  
But the swart of his face is stricken white,  
And the grip of his hand is cold.

"Now, hark ye, men of the Frontier Corps,  
I ride from the Beaver Creek,  
And I saw a sight at the grim mid-night  
That has turned a strong man sick.





*"Chief Black Bear's out from the Crow Creek lands,  
The buzzards his track have showed ;  
Last eve he pillaged at Old Fort James,  
To-day on the Fire-Steel Road.*

*"And Corporal Stowe, of the Frontier Corps,  
On furlough to reap his grain,  
At the Peska stage-house lieth dead,  
With his wife and children twain."*

*Then up and spoke First Sergeant Ross,  
Who had bunked with Corporal Stowe :  
"By the glory of God, they shall pay in blood  
The debt of that dastard blow !*

*"Ye know the path to the Crow Creek lands ;  
It is sown with this spawn of hell,  
And there's deep ravine and there's plum-hedge green,  
To shelter a foeman well.*

*"Now, who of my comrades mounts with me  
For a murdered mess-mate's wrong,  
That the Sioux who rides with those scalps at his side  
May swing from a hempen thong ? "*

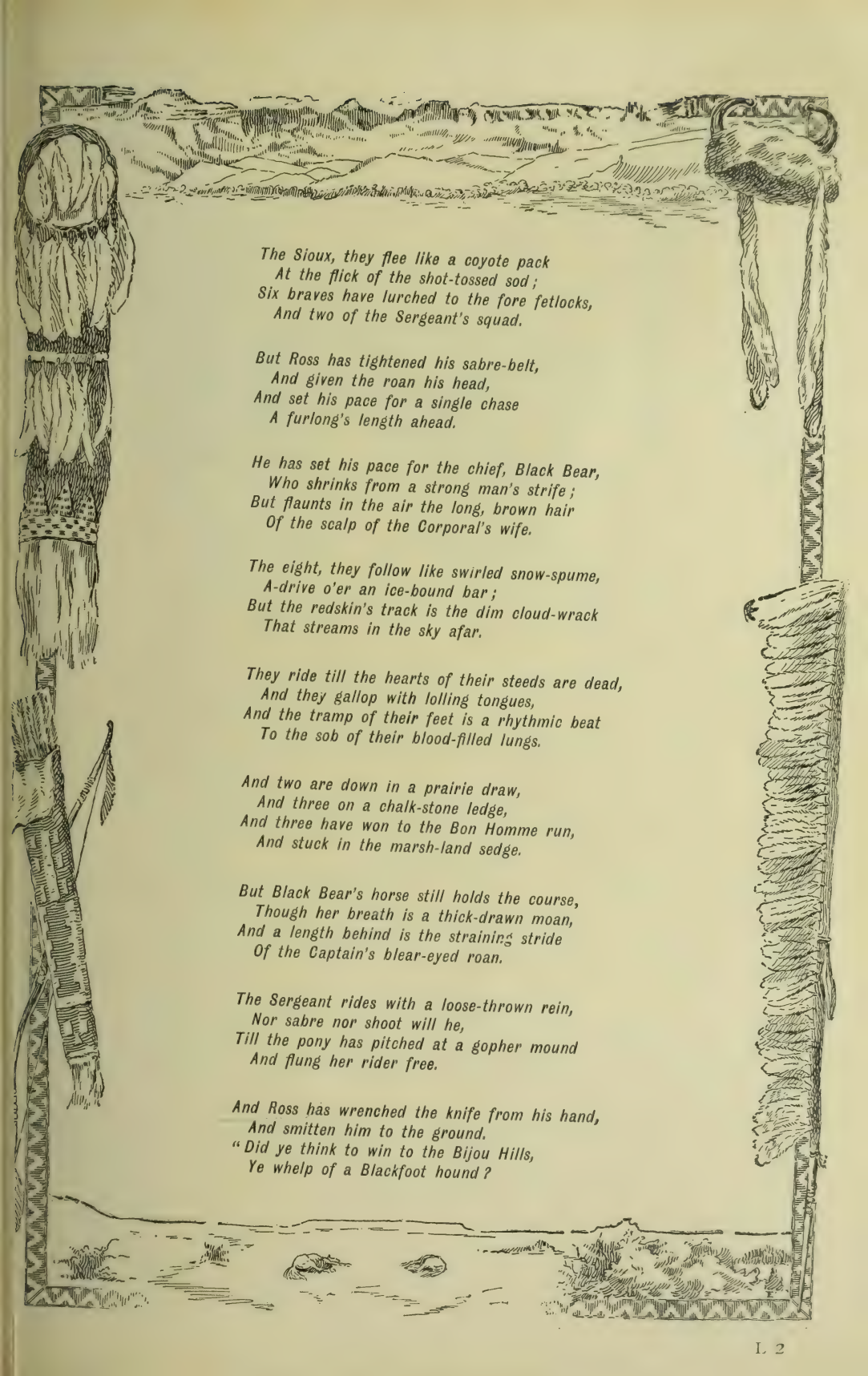
*Of three score men there were only ten  
Would gird for that chase of death.  
Quoth Ross : "As ye please. For the cur his fleas,  
But men for the rifle's breath."*

*They have tightened girths and passed the lines  
Ere the lowland mists have flown.  
The ten are astride of the squadron's best,  
But Ross, of the Captain's roan.*

*They ride till the crickets have sought the shade ;  
They ride till the sun-motes glance,  
And they have espied on a far hillside  
The whirl of the Sioux scalp dance.*

*Then it's up past the smouldering stage-house barn,  
And out by the well-curb's marge ;  
The Sioux are a-leap for the tether-ropes ;  
"Revolvers ! Guide centre ! Charge ! "*





*The Sioux, they flee like a coyote pack  
At the flick of the shot-tossed sod;  
Six braves have lurched to the fore fetlocks,  
And two of the Sergeant's squad.*

*But Ross has tightened his sabre-belt,  
And given the roan his head,  
And set his pace for a single chase  
A furlong's length ahead.*

*He has set his pace for the chief, Black Bear,  
Who shrinks from a strong man's strife;  
But flaunts in the air the long, brown hair  
Of the scalp of the Corporal's wife.*

*The eight, they follow like swirled snow-spume,  
A-drive o'er an ice-bound bar;  
But the redskin's track is the dim cloud-wrack  
That streams in the sky afar.*

*They ride till the hearts of their steeds are dead,  
And they gallop with lolling tongues,  
And the tramp of their feet is a rhythmic beat  
To the sob of their blood-filled lungs.*

*And two are down in a prairie draw,  
And three on a chalk-stone ledge,  
And three have won to the Bon Homme run,  
And stuck in the marsh-land sedge.*

*But Black Bear's horse still holds the course,  
Though her breath is a thick-drawn moan,  
And a length behind is the straining stride  
Of the Captain's bleary-eyed roan.*

*The Sergeant rides with a loose-thrown rein,  
Nor sabre nor shoot will he,  
Till the pony has pitched at a gopher mound  
And flung her rider free.*

*And Ross has wrenched the knife from his hand,  
And smitten him to the ground.  
"Did ye think to win to the Bijou Hills,  
Ye whelp of a Blackfoot hound?"*



*"I had riddled your carcass this six miles back,  
And left ye to rot on the plain,  
Had the blood of the slaughtered not called on me  
That I hail ye to Peska again.*

*"To point this lesson to all your tribe:  
That the price of a white man's soul,  
No longer goes in the mart of death  
Unpaid to its last dark goal.*

*"Wherefore, that your tribesmen may see and feel  
The cost of a white man's wrong,  
And to sweeten the rest of my messmate's kin,  
Ye shall swing from a hempen thong."*

*He has slung the chief to the saddle-bow,  
Triced up in his own raw-hide,  
And has borne him back to the stage-house yard,  
All bleak on the green hillside.*

*And they swung him at dawn from a scaffold stout,  
As a warning to all his kind,  
To fatten the birds and to scare the herds,  
And to sport with the prairie wind.*







"IT'S TOO DEEP!" CRIED THE ANXIOUS ONE ON THE SHORE. "OH, MY!"

## WEE MACGREGOR

### "SHIPS THAT PASS"

By J. J. B.

*Illustrated by Angusine Macgregor*

THE small boy in the trim sailor suit, broad-brimmed straw hat with "H.M.S. Valiant" in gold letters on the dark-blue ribbon, spotless white collar with gold anchors at the corners, and fine shoes and stockings, stood helplessly on the sunlit shore, and with misty eyes gazed hopelessly at his toy yacht drifting out to sea.

"Whit wey dae ye no' wade in efter yer boat?" demanded Macgregor, who for half-an-hour had been envying the owner his pretty craft from a little distance, and who now approached the disconsolate youngster.

The latter glanced at his questioner, but made no reply.

"Gaun! Tak' aff yer shoes an' stockin's quick, or ye'll loss yer boat," said Macgregor, excitedly. He looked about for a rowing-boat which might lend assistance, but none was visible in that quiet part of the bay. "Gaun! Wade!" he repeated. "Are ye feart?"

"Mamma said I wasn't to wade," said the alleged member of the crew of "H.M.S. Valiant."

"Whit wey?"

"She said it was too cold." He gave a sniff of despair as his eyes turned to his toy.

"Ach! It's no' that cauld. I'll wade fur yer boat, if ye like."

"Oh!" It was all he could say, but he looked with gratitude at Macgregor, who was already unlacing one of his stout boots.

A minute later Macgregor had rolled his breeches up his bare legs, and checking an exclamation at the first contact with the water, was wading gingerly after the model yacht.

"It's awfu' warm," he remarked, with a shiver.

"Don't get your trousers wet," said the other.

"Nae fears!" returned Macgregor, stepping into a small depression and

soaking several inches of his nether garments. "I'm no' heedin' onyway," he said bravely.

"You can't get it. It's too deep," cried the anxious one on the shore. "Oh, my!"

The exclamation was caused by Macgregor taking a plunge forward, soaking his clothes still further, but grabbing successfully at the boat. Then he turned and waded cautiously to the shore, and presented the owner with his almost lost property, remarking—

"There yer boat. Whit wey did ye no' keep a grup o' the string?"

The other clasped his treasure, and gazed with speechless thankfulness at the deliverer.

"It's a daft-like thing to be sailin' a boat if ye dinna wade," observed Macgregor, sitting down on a rock and proceeding to dry his feet and legs with his bonnet. Suddenly he desisted from the operation, as if struck by an idea, and getting up again, said easily—

"I'll help ye to sail yer boat, if ye like."

The other youngster looked doubtful for a moment, for Macgregor's previous remark had offended him somewhat.

"Come on," said Macgregor, with increasing eagerness. "You can be the captain, an' I'll be the sailor. Eh?"

Evidently overcome by the flattering proposal, the owner of the yacht nodded, and allowed the proposer to take the craft from his hands.

"My! It's an unco fine boat!" Macgregor observed, admiringly. "Whaur got ye it?"

"Uncle William gave me it," replied the other, beginning to find his tongue, "and it's called the 'Britannia.'"

"The whit?"

"The 'Britannia.'"

"Aw, ay. It's no' an awfu' nice name; but it's a fine boat. I wisht I had as fine a boat. Whit's yer name?" he inquired, wading into the water. "Mines is Macgreegor Robison."

"Charlie Fortune."

"That's a queer-like name. Whaur d'ye come frae?"

Charlie looked puzzled.

"D'ye come frae Glesca? Eh?"

"Yes."

"I never seen ye afore. Whaur d'ye bide in Glesca?"

"Kelvinside. Royal Gardens, Kelvin-side."

"Aw, ye'll be gentry," said Macgregor, a little scornfully.

"I don't know," said Charlie. "Are you gentry?"

"Nae fears! I wudna be gentry fur onythin'."

Charlie did not quite understand. Presently he asked shyly: "Has your mamma got a house at Rothsay?"

"Naw. But Granpaw Purdie's got a hoose, an' I'm bidin' wi' him. Hoo lang are ye bidin' in Rothsay?"

"Three months."

"My! I wisht I wis you! I'm gaun hame next week. But I'll be back again shin. Granpaw Purdie likes when I'm bidin' wi' him. Thon's him ower thonder." And Macgregor indicated the distant figure of the old man who sat on a flat boulder placidly smoking and reading a morning paper.

Mr. Purdie reminded Charlie of an old gardener occasionally employed by his wealthy father; but the boy made no remark, and Macgregor placed the boat in the water, crying out with delight as her sails caught a light breeze.

"Gang ower to thon rock," commanded Macgregor, forgetting in his excitement that, being the sailor, it was not his place to give orders, "an' I'll gar the boat sail to ye."

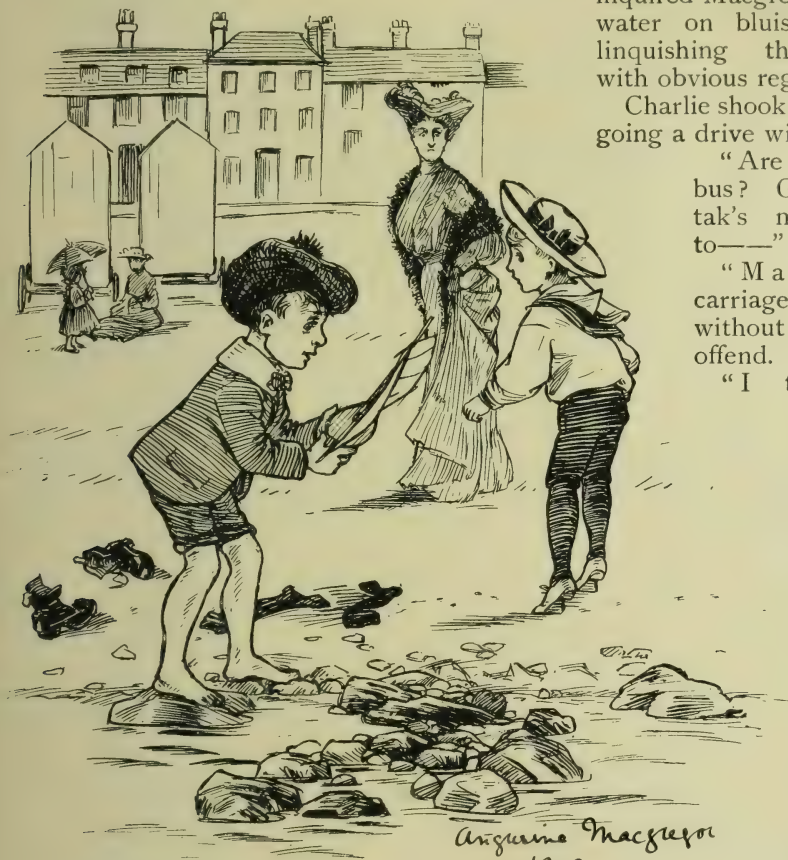
Charlie obediently made for a spur of rock that entered the water a few yards, and waited there patiently while his new acquaintance managed the yacht, not perhaps very skilfully, but entirely to his own satisfaction.

"I'm daein' fine, am I no'?" exclaimed Macgregor, jubilantly, as he approached the captain, who, on his way along the spur had soaked his nice brown shoes in



a shallow pool, and who was now crouching on a slippery rock, fearful lest his mother should come down to the shore and catch him.

"I'm daein' fine, am I no'?" repeated Macgregor.



"GOOD-BYE, MACGREGOR."

"Yes," returned Charlie, rather dejectedly.

"Weel, I'll tak' the boat ower thonder, an' sail it back to ye again."

"I wish I could sail the boat, too," said Charlie.

"But ye canna sail if ye canna get takin' yer bare feet. But never heed. Captains never tak' their bare feet," said Macgregor, cheerily, wading off with the yacht.

He enjoyed himself tremendously for nearly an hour, at the end of which period Charlie announced, a trifle timidly, that it was time for him to go home.

"Wull ye be here in the efternune?" inquired Macgregor, leaving the water on bluish feet and relinquishing the "Britannia" with obvious regret.

Charlie shook his head. "I'm going a drive with mamma."

"Are ye gaun in the bus? Granpaw whiles tak's me fur a ride to——"

"Mamma has a carriage," said Charlie, without meaning to offend.

"I thocht ye wis gentry," said Macgregor, with a pitying gaze at Charlie. There was a pause, and then his eyes turned again to the yacht. "Wull ye be herethemorn?"

"I don't know," said Charlie, who wasn't sure that he liked Macgregor's manner of speech, but who

still felt grateful to him and was also impressed by his sturdiness.

"Ye micht try an' come. An' tell yer Maw ye want to tak' yer bare feet, an' we'll baith be sailors. Eh?"

"I'll try. Thank ye for—for saving my boat."

"Aw, never heed that. Jist try an' come the morn, an' I'll come early an' build a pier fur the boat to come to."

"I'll try," said Charlie once more, and,

with a smile on his small delicate face, he hurried up the beach.

Macgregor warmed his legs on the sunny shingle, and got into his boots and stockings; then rejoined his grandfather, hoping the old man would not notice the damp condition of his breeches.

Mr. Purdie laid down his paper, and smilingly looked over his spectacles at his grandson.

"I see ye've been makin' a new freen', Macgregor. Whit laddie wis thon?"

"Chairlie—I furget his ither name. He lost his boat, an' I tuk ma bare feet an' gaed in an' got it back fur him."

Mr. Purdie beamed with pride and patted the boy's shoulder. "'Deed, that wis rale kind o' ye, ma mannie. He wud be gled to get back his boat, an' he wud be obleeged to yersel' fur gettin' it. I'm thinkin' ye deserve a penny," and out came the old man's old purse.

"Thenk ye, Granpaw. An' then I sailed his boat fur him. He cudna sail it hissel', fur his Maw winna let him tak' his bare feet. She maun be an' auld daftie!"

"Whisht, whisht!" said Mr. Purdie, reprovingly. "But whit like is Chairlie?"

"Och, he's gey peely-wally, an' I think he's gentry; but his boat's an' awfu' fine yin."

"Whit gars ye think he's gentry?"

"He bides in Kelvinside, an' his Maw rides in a cairriage, an' he speaks like Aunt Purdie when she's haein' a party."

At the last reason Mr. Purdie gave a badly suppressed chuckle. "Weel, weel, Macgregor, ye're gettin' on. Ye're the yin to notice things."

"Ay; I'm gey fly, Granpaw," said Macgregor.

"But mind an' no' lead Chairlie intil ony mischief," Mr. Purdie went on. "An' yer no' to temp' him to tak' his bare feet if his mither disna want him to dae it. Noo, it's time we wis gaun hame to wur denner. Gi'e's yer haun', ma mannie."

\* \* \* \* \*

Next day, when Macgregor had al-

most given up hope, and stood disconsolately eyeing the pier he had constructed as promised, Charlie arrived, panting, with the "Britannia" in his arms.

"I thoct ye wisna comin'," said Macgregor.

"Mamma didn't want me to play on the shore to-day."

"Whit wey?"

"I don't know."

"Did ye rin awa' frae her the noo?"

"No. But Uncle William came in, and he asked her for me, and then she said I could go for half-an-hour. But I'm not to get wading."

"Are ye no'? I wudna like to be you," said Macgregor, dabbling his already bare feet in the water. "Weel, ye can be the man on the pier. Some o' the stanes is a wee thing shoogly, but ye'll jist ha'e to luk whaur ye pit yer feet, Chairlie."

Charlie, after a little hesitation, walked gingerly down the narrow passage of loose stones which terminated with a large flat one, where he found a fairly sure foothold.

"That's it!" cried Macgregor, wading out from shore till the water was within half-an-inch of his clothing. "Ye're jist like a pier-man."

Charlie was so gratified that he nearly fell off his perch. Very cautiously he placed his model afloat, and the wind carried it out to sea, Macgregor moving along so as to intercept it.

Macgregor wanted to have the "Britannia" sail back to its owner, but the mystery of navigation was too much for him, so he carried it to Charlie, who set it off again.

After all, it wasn't such bad fun being a pier-man, and in about ten minutes the youngsters were as friendly as could be. And they spent a glorious hour-and-a-quarter.

"Wull ye be here the morn?" asked Macgregor, when his new chum said, rather fearfully, that he must depart.

"Yes." There was a flush on Charlie's face that ought to have done his mother



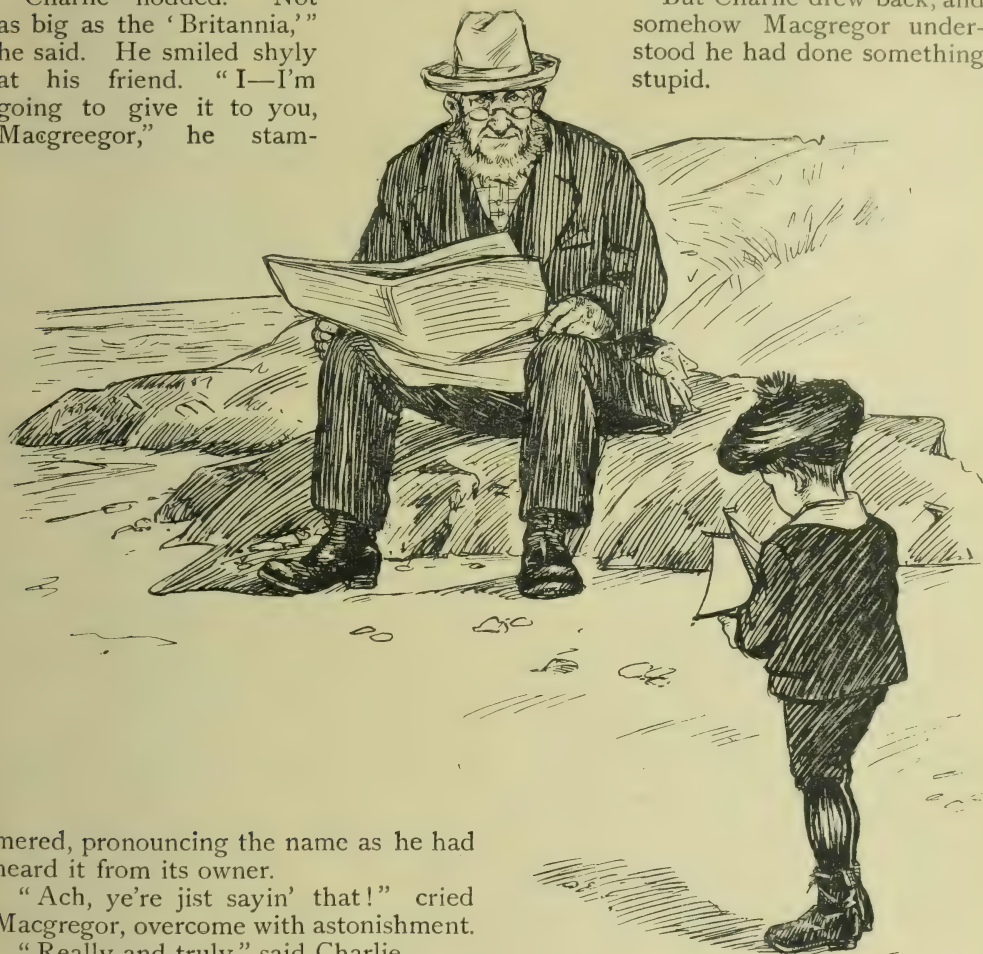
good to see. "Yes," he repeated eagerly. "And I'll bring my other boat."

"My! Ha'e ye anither boat, Chairlie?"

Charlie nodded. "Not as big as the 'Britannia,'" he said. He smiled shyly at his friend. "I—I'm going to give it to you, Macgregor," he stam-

"Please take the boat," he murmured. Macgregor fumbled in his pocket. "I'll gi'e ye ma penny," he said, producing it.

But Charlie drew back, and somehow Macgregor understood he had done something stupid.



Angeline Macgregor  
1903

mered, pronouncing the name as he had heard it from its owner.

"Ach, ye're jist sayin' that!" cried Macgregor, overcome with astonishment.

"Really and truly," said Charlie.

"Ye—ye're faur ower kind," whispered Macgregor, fairly at a loss for once in his little life. He did not know that Charlie had never had a real boy companion, for Charlie, between his clever father, his would-be "fashionable" mother, and his plaintive tutor, was being brought up to be a "gentleman" and nothing more.

Feeling and looking more awkward and awkward, Charlie took the liberty of touching Macgregor's arm between the wrist and the elbow.

"YE'VE GOT VER BOAT, MACGREGOR."

Charlie, with a poor smile, ran off, and Macgregor, after a curious gaze after him, resumed his boots and stockings.

\* \* \* \* \*

The day following was wet as it can be on the west coast of Scotland, and in spite of Macgregor's open yearning for

his new toy, his grandparents would not allow him out of doors.

"Maybe Chairlie'll be there wi' ma boat," he pleaded.

But Granpaw Purdie gently said: "It's no' vera likely;" and Granmaw Purdie remarked: "Ye wud jist get yer daith o' cauld, ma dearie."

But the morning after broke brilliantly—too brilliantly, perhaps, to last.

At ten o'clock Mr. Purdie was sitting on his favourite rock, his pipe in his mouth, his specs on his nose, and his newspaper before him. "I wud like to come an' see yer freen' Chairlie," he had said, when his grandson left him; "I like weans that's kind til ither weans." And Macgregor had promised to wave a signal when Charlie came with the boats. (Mr. Purdie had filled his pockets with sweets for the occasion.)

Macgregor reached the appointed place, which seemed so familiar, although it was only his third visit, and, his friend not being in sight, proceeded to repair the pier which several tides had somewhat disarranged.

He became so busy and so interested that he did not hear the sound of flying feet until they were close upon him. Then he rose from his stooping posture, and beheld Charlie with a beautiful—such a beautiful—little boat in his arms.

"Here's your boat, Macgreedor!" gasped Charlie.

"My!" cried Macgregor, taking it. "Oh, Chairlie, ye're awfu——"

"Mamma said I wasn't to play with you any more; but—but I ran away, and——"

"Whit wey?"

Charlie shook his head. "I like you," he panted. "I never had another little boy to—to play with. I—I——"

*"Charlie, come here at once!"*

"Good-bye, Macgreedor," said Charlie, and, turning, ran some fifty yards to the elegantly dressed lady who had called him.

"She's gentry," said Macgregor to himself; but he, of course, did not hear her say crossly to Charlie: "What do you mean by speaking to that horrid boy after I told you never to speak to him again?"

Macgregor, after waiting awhile in the hope that Charlie would return, hastened towards his grandfather to exhibit his prize, but as he proceeded his pace slackened.

"Ye've got yer boat, Macgreedor!" the old man exclaimed. "Dod, but it's a bonny boat! It wis unco kind o' Chairlie to gi'e ye that. Bless the laddie. But whit wey did ye no' wave on me? Eh? Is Chairlie waitin' ower thonder?"

Macgregor laid his boat on the ground. "Chairlie ran awa'. He said his Maw didna want him to play wi' me ony mair. Granpaw, whit wey?"

"Whit's that ye're saying, Macgreedor?"

"Chairlie said his Maw didna want him to play wi' me ony mair. I think she's gentry. She's an' auld footer. I like Chairlie."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Purdie, suddenly. Then he uttered several words, wildly.

Macgregor gaped. Never before had he heard his grandfather use such words.

But quarter-of-an-hour later he was sailing his boat—how well it sailed!—with love in his young heart for Charlie Fortune.



## "GOLDEN FLEECE"

### THE ADVENTURES OF A FORTUNE-HUNTING EARL

By DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.—Arthur Gordon-Beauvais, Earl of Frothingham, after most dispiriting reverses in New York, Boston and Washington, has decided to try his fortune in Chicago, and proceeds thither on the invitation of Barney, a steamship acquaintance.

#### XVI.

AT Chicago Barney came down the platform to meet Frothingham.

"Here you are!" he exclaimed. "Six months in the country, but not a bit changed. And if an American goes over to your side and stays a week he has to learn the language all over again when he gets back."

It was still daylight, and Barney told his coachman to drive home by way of the "store"—the great "Barney and Company Emporium—seventy stores and a bank, three restaurants, a nursery and an emergency hospital, all under one roof." Frothingham watched the throngs pouring torrent-like through the cañons made by the towering buildings. "Don't it remind you of New York?" asked Barney.

"Yes—and no," he replied.

It seemed to him in the comparison that New York was a Titanic triumph, Chicago a Titanic struggle; New York a finished—or, at least, definite—creation, Chicago a chaos in convulsion. There was in the look and the noise of it an indefinable menace which oppressed him—filled him with vague uneasiness. When Barney told him the site of it was a swamp a few years before, he thought of a fairy story his nurse had told him—of a magic city that used to rise from an enchanted morass at dusk, live a single night, and vanish with the dawn. And as the daylight waned, he wondered whether this inchoate, volcanic unreality of a city

would not soon be again engulfed in the bosom of the swamp. But he began to note here and there traces of form—civilised form—peering from the chaos to indicate the trend of the convulsion—that it was upward, not downward.

"It is—tremendous!" said Frothingham. "Is it bigger than New York?"

"No," Barney reluctantly answered. Then he added, with curiously, defiant energy: "But it *will* be! And it's American, which New York ain't. It's full of people that think for themselves and do as they please. We ain't got many apes out here. We run more to humans."

They were now driving past Barney and Company's—a barrack-like structure, towering storey on storey from a huge base bounded by four streets, where surged a seemingly insane confusion of men, women, children, horses, vans, automobiles, articulate in the demoniac voices of boys shrieking extras and drivers bawling oaths. And the sky blackened suddenly, and from the direction of the lake came a storm, cruelly cold, bitter as hate, seizing the struggling, swearing, shouting mass of men and animals, lashing them with whips of icy rain and pelting them with bullets of hail.

"That's my little place," said Barney.

"It's—tremendous!" was all Frothingham could say. The "Emporium" and its surroundings dazed him.

Barney told the story of creation as it read for him. He had been a drummer for a suspender house—eighteen hundred dollars a year for touring the towns

of northern Indiana and Illinois; four thousand dollars put by after twelve years of toil; eyes ever alert for a chance to go into business on his own account. One of his towns was Terre Haute—he called it Terry Hut. In it was a dry-goods shop kept by a man named Meakim. Barney found that, of all the retailers he visited, Meakim was by far the shrewdest, the most energetic, and, above all, that he had an amazing talent for “dressing” his show windows and show cases. He persuaded Meakim to sell out and adventure Chicago with him. They set up in a small way and in an obscure corner. But both toiled. Barney was shrewd and almost sleepless, and Meakim “dressed” the windows and displayed the goods on and over the counters. They prospered, spread too rapidly for their capital, failed, gathered themselves together, prospered again. “I’ve built three stores in fourteen years,” said Barney. “This last one was finished only five years ago—the year Meakim died. And already it’s too small—we’re moving our wholesale department to another building.”

Presently they were in Michigan Avenue and at Barney’s house. It was a mass of Indiana limestone which he—with the assistance of a builder, audaciously “branched out” as an architect—had fashioned into a fantastic combination of German mediæval fortress and Italian renaissance villa.

“Here’s where I live,” said Barney, as the carriage stopped before the huge doors studded with enormous bronze nails. “And don’t you dare back up Nelly when she jeers about it. She says she can’t look at it without laughing, or come into it without blushing. I suppose it *is* no good, in the way of art; but it keeps out the rain, and that’s the main point in a house, ain’t it?”

As he was getting out his keys the door was opened by a maid in a black dress, a white apron and cap.

“Jessie,” said he, in a tone which suggested that she might be his daughter,

“this is the Earl of Frothingham, and I want you to take good care of him and of the young man who’s coming with his trunks.”

Frothingham took off his hat and bowed vaguely to the maid, who smiled cordially.

“I’ll show you your room,” she said.

“Never mind, Jessie,” interrupted Barney. “You needn’t bother. I’ll take him up myself. But I know everything’s all right—Nelly looked after that.”

Frothingham was impressed by the astonishing difference between the exterior and the interior of the house. He felt at home at once in this interior—handsome, cheerful, the absurd splendours of the architect-builder’s devising softened into comfort and good taste.

“We thought you’d like your young man near you,” explained Barney, “so we put a bed in the dressing-room.”

“Thank you,” said Frothingham. “This is charming!”

“Nelly knows her business.” Barney’s good-natured face, with its many dignifying scars from his wars with destiny, beamed paternal enthusiasm. “You needn’t dress for dinner unless you want to,” he went on. “I never do unless we have company, or I go out somewhere to something swell and formal. Wickham sometimes does and sometimes don’t.”

“I think I’ll dress, if you don’t mind,” said Frothingham, diplomatically.

“Suit yourself. This is Liberty Hall. We ain’t got any rules.” He looked at his watch. “That clock on the mantel there is four minutes fast. It’s seven minutes to seven by the right time. We’re having dinner at half-past seven, but you can come down just as soon as you feel like it.”

Frothingham descended at five minutes before the dinner hour, and found Nelly alone in the front parlour. Superficially, she was like the women he had met in the Eastern cities. Like them, she was dressed in a gown ob-



viously imported from Paris ; like them, she wore it as only American and French women wear their clothes. He saw instantly that she was a well-bred girl of a most attractive American type. She was tall and long of limb—her arms were almost too long. She had a great deal of dark brown hair shading fascinatingly into black here and there. She had dark eyes—not brown, as he at first glance thought, but dark grey—a humour-loving mouth, a serious brow, a clear, delicate olive skin. As she and Frothingham were shaking hands, her father and her brother entered—the brother, Wickham, a huge fellow, topping his father by several inches, and having his father's keen, good-natured dark grey eyes and his father's features, except that the outline was more refined without being less strong.

Barney put his arm round his daughter, and, with a foolish-fond expression, said : " Didn't I tell you, Frothingham ? Wasn't I right ? "

If Frothingham had been new to " the States " he would have thought this the strongest kind of a bid for him to enter the family. But he understood the American character in its obvious phases now. " The old chap's mad about her," was all Barney's speech suggested to him. " And," he admitted to himself, " I think he has reason to be. She's got the look I like." He noted the humorous comment on her father's flattery in Nelly's dark eyes, as he examined her through his eyeglass with ostentatiously critical minuteness. " Quite up to the mark, I should say," he replied, with polite audacity, adding : " though I don't pretend to be an expert."

" You see, I did put on my dress suit, after all," said Barney, looking down at his old-fashioned, ill-fitting clothes. " The children would have it. I always feel like a stranded fish in these togs. You see, I never wore 'em in my life till I was past forty."

Wickham looked a little nervously at Frothingham ; Nelly was smiling with



" I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE A STRANDED FISH IN THESE TOGS."

frank amusement. Then Wickham looked ashamed of himself. But he carefully observed the peculiar stripes down the legs of Frothingham's trousers and the curious cut of his waistcoat and coat. " I must find out who's his tailor," he thought. " Poole don't send me over the real thing. I wish I dared wear a monocle. It's a whole outfit of brains and manners by itself. I don't believe he takes it out, even at night."

A maid announced dinner — not

"Dinner is served," but "Dinner, Mr. Barney." And Barney jumped up with: "I'm glad to hear it. I'm hungry as a wolf."

The dining-room was done in old English fashion—and the dinner, too, though an American would have called it the American fashion. The feature of its four courses was a huge roast, set before Barney on a great platter, with a mighty carving-knife like a scimitar, and a fork like a two-pronged spit. Barney himself carved—an energetic performance, lacking in grace, perhaps, but swift and sure. On the table between him and the platter was a pile of plates. He put a slice of roast into the top plate, and the waitress removed it, carried it to Nelly's place, and set it down. This was repeated until all were served.

Frothingham watched Barney's movements attentively, surprised that any of the American upper classes condescended to eat in such simplicity. He was almost startled when a bottle of wine was brought, for he had not forgotten Barney's denunciation of drink and drinkers. He had seen so many concessions of real or reputed principle for his benefit since he had been moving about in American "high life," that he was somewhat cynical as to principle in America. But he had not expected to find this degree, or even kind, of weakness in Barney.

"He told me he wouldn't permit the stuff to come into his house," he thought, laughing to himself. Then he noticed that none of the family drank it. One taste was enough for him. "No wonder he's opposed to wine," he said to himself. Then aloud: "If you don't mind, I'll just take whisky—a little Scotch."

Barney showed amused embarrassment. Nelly and Wickham laughed.

"We don't have anything to drink," she explained. "Papa doesn't approve. But he told us you'd been brought up differently—that you must have wine;

so we've got wine. But there isn't any whisky."

Frothingham looked vague. He was relieved to find that his friend Barney was not quite so weak as he had feared.

"It doesn't in the least matter," he replied. "I shall get on famously with this."

"I'll take you down to the club after a while," said Wickham, "and you can have all you want. And to-morrow—eh, father?"

"Yes — yes — of course," answered Barney. "I never do try to put on style that I don't get left."

He winked at one of the maids significantly, and when she drew near, and bent her head, whispered to her. She left the dining-room; in about five minutes she reappeared with a decanter of Scotch, a tall glass, a bowl of ice, and a bottle of mineral water on her tray.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Nelly; "where did that come from?"

Barney beamed, triumphant.

"We've got neighbours, haven't we?"

"But what *will* they think of you?" she asked, pretending to be shocked.

"I don't know—and I don't care," he answered. "I never did spend much time in worrying about what my neighbours thought of me. Probably that's why we're here, and not in the poor-house."

After dinner Frothingham stayed with Nelly in the parlour, instead of going to the club with Wickham. He had found many girls in America who thought they were natural, or who affected naturalness as a pose; but here was the first girl, it so happened, who was really natural, without thinking anything about it. She had all the charm of the girls of his own country for him—he liked ingenuousness—and in addition she had the charm of knowledge. She knew the world, but she looked at it with ingenuous eyes—and he would not have believed this a possible combination.

"How do these Americans manage



it?" he said to himself. "Her father comes from well down in the lower classes, yet he has all the assurance of an aristocrat. And as for the girl, she reminds me of Evelyn—and Gwen."

"Do you know," he said to her, "you don't suggest an American girl at all—that is, you do and you don't. You women over here are cleverer than ours, but a good many of them lack a certain something—a—I don't know just what to call it. It seems to me that—well, they are ladies, of course. But many of them—not all—but a great many of those I've chanced to meet—make me feel as if they were not exactly sure of themselves—as if they were trying to live up to something they'd read about or seen somewhere. I don't know that I make myself clear."

"Perfectly," replied Nelly. "You mean that they act as if they weren't satisfied with being the kind of lady they were born, and are trying to be some other kind—and don't succeed at it especially well."

"Exactly," said Frothingham. "I feel like saying to them: 'Oh, come now, chuck it, won't you, and let's see what you're really like!' But you—you remind me of our women, except that you're not ghastly dull, as most of 'em are. Gad! they sit about in the country until they're feeble-minded. After a certain age, about all there is left of them is the match-making instinct. You'd understand if you'd been over there."

"I have been there," answered Nelly. "I spent more than a year in Europe—nearly half of it in your country. I liked it, but—well, one likes one's own country best, of course."

"I thought you American women preferred the other side?"

"Oh, a few of us do—those who aren't happy unless they have somebody bowing and scraping to them, or are bowing and scraping to somebody. You know, the poor we have always with us—the poor in spirit as well as the other kind of poor."

Before they had talked an hour Frothingham felt that the outlook for his campaign in the Barney house was not promising. Nelly was frank and friendly, and he saw that she liked him. But there was something in her atmosphere which made him know that she cared little for the things which were everything to him, and which must be everything to the woman he might hope to win. He feared that she was not for him. "She ain't in my class—or, perhaps I'd better say, I ain't in hers."

When Wickham came, at half-past ten, she left them. After suppressing yawns for fifteen minutes, he said:—

"I'm off to bed. I was at a dance last night, and owe myself five hours' sleep. You see, father and I get up at half-past six. We have to be at the store at eight."

At the store! At eight! "And he hasn't in the least the look of that sort of chap," thought Frothingham. As for rising at half-past six, one might do it to hunt or shoot. But to do it morning after morning—"merely to set a lot of bounders to selling a lot of cloth"—preposterous!

## XVII.

After a few days of Chicago, Frothingham felt utterly out of place. There were no idlers—no idling-places. To idle meant to sit in lonely boredom.

Barney and his son were busy all day. They grudged the half-hour of that precious time of theirs which they spent at luncheon. Nelly, too, had her work—some sort of a school she was running, away off somewhere in a poorer part of the town. He was sensitive enough soon to discover, in spite of her courtesy, that he was interrupting her routine seriously, and was in the way to becoming a burden. He saw as much of her as he dared; she had for him a charm that became the more difficult to resist as his hope of winning her decreased. He relieved her of himself

during her busy hours so tactfully that she did not suspect him of penetrating what she honestly tried to conceal.

He betook himself to the club. It was usually deserted. If a man did enter, he raced through and away as if pursued by demons. At luncheon, all ate as if struggling for a prize offered to him who should chew the least, swallow the fastest, and finish the soonest. He called on the women he met—they were out, or just going out, or just coming in to busy themselves at home.

In New York, Boston, Washington, he had thought the leisure class a lame imitation of the European class of industrious, experienced idlers, had found it small and peculiarly unsatisfactory because its men were inferior to its women in numbers, and especially in brains. But here—there wasn't a pretence of a leisure class except the loungers in the parks.

"This is a howling wilderness," he said to himself. "I should be better off in a desert. These lunatics make my head swim."

Wherever he went, all seemed possessed of, and pursued by, fever-demons. If it was a dinner, the diners were eager to dispatch it. The courses were served swiftly, the waiters snatching one's plate if he for a second ceased the machine-like lifting of food. The conversation was nervous and in the shrill tones of acute mental excitement. Words were cut short and slapped together almost incoherently. Sentences were left unfinished, the speaker leaping on to another sentence, or submerged by the breaking of the flimsy speech-dam of the person he was addressing. Often all were talking at the same time.

"Surely you can listen as you talk!" said a woman to whom he complained. "Think how much time it saves!"

If it was a dance, the orchestra de-tonated the notes like cartridges from a Maxim gun. The dancers whirled or raced furiously.

"Why this hurry?" he gasped to a

handsome, powerful girl who had dragged him round a ballroom twice, had flung him into a chair, and was dashing away with another man to finish the waltz.

"I've got to catch the train for the millennium," she screamed back over her shoulder, and disappeared in the maelstrom.

Even at the play the audience shuffled uneasily while the players sped through their lines or the orchestra rattled off the between-the-acts music; and afterwards all rushed from the theatre as if it were afire. The blank expression habitual to Frothingham's face was no longer a disguise; it was a reflection of his internal state.

"I must get out of this," he said to himself, at the end of two weeks. "The disease may be catching. Now I understand that fellow who went from here to tear London up by the roots and put in his tuppenny tubes. A Chicagoan should be barred from a country like any other plague."

And he wrote his sister that he was "beginning to twitch with the Chicago disease."

Evelyn had written him regularly—a letter by each Wednesday's steamer. She had put a brave face upon their affairs, had tried to make him picture life at Beauvais House as smooth—almost happy. But he had more than suspected that a far different story ran between the lines; and when she wrote that she had engaged herself to Charley Sidney he understood.

Seven months before he would have grumbled and cursed, and would have accepted the sacrifice. Now, it roused in him a fierce protest—a feeling of abhorrence of which he would not have been capable before he visited America—and the Barneys.

"She sha'n't sell herself to that creeping cad," he said, and on impulse he cabled: "Sidney, impossible and unnecessary. You must break it. Answer."

The answer came later: "Shall do as you wish."





"SAY THAT MISS HOOPER'S AT THE TELEPHONE."

Instead of being relieved he repented his impulse, wondering where it had come from, fell into a profound depression. Seven months of stalking; nothing to show for it but three ridiculous, sickening misses. And here he was with an empty bag; and what little heart he once had for the game was gone. In its place a disgust for it and for himself.

"How Nelly Barney would scorn me if she knew what a creature I am!" he said.

He was now thinking a great deal on the subject of Nelly Barney's standards for men, and also on the subject of Nelly Barney as a standard for women. In neither direction did he find any encouragement. He knew her through being in the same house with her day after day—through seeing her at all hours and in all moods; and she never made the slightest attempt to conceal her real self. He felt that such a woman could not be attracted by his title—would not be likely to be attracted by himself. He felt that she was at the same time more worth the winning than any other woman he knew in America—"Yes, or in England," he confessed to himself at last.

"What a pity! what a beastly, frightful shame!" he thought. "She's got everything that I must have, and everything that I want, too."

But he had only twelve hundred dollars left, including the thousand from Wallingford. "I must have gone clean mad!" he exclaimed, whenever he wasn't with her, and was alone with his affairs. Finally he was able to goad himself into dashing feverishly about in Chicago society. He sought the set she avoided. It was to him an additional charm in her that she did avoid it, for he had at bottom the extra-prim ideas of women which have never lost their hold upon Englishmen. There was, however, no alternative to seeking this set. He thought it the only one in which he was likely to succeed—those

among the fashionable young women of the rich families who carried the "free and easy" pose in speech and manner to the point where it looked far worse to a foreigner than it was, who laughed and talked noisily in public, who wore very loud and very clinging dresses, very big hats and very light shoes.

The newspapers gave him columns of free advertising, and, with the Barneys vouching for him, and "Wick" Barney pushing him, he immediately became a figure. Some of the young women of the "lively" set pursued him with an ardour which he would have mistaken when he first landed for evidence of serious attachment or intentions. But he had learned something of the ways of American flirts, married and single, and he had had experience of that American curiosity as to foreigners of rank, which he had at first regarded as the frankest kind of title-worship.

Presently he found a girl he thought he could not be mistaken in fancying he could get—Jane or Jenny (Jeanne, she wrote it) Hooper, the daughter of that famous Amzi Hooper, whose "Hooper's High-Class Hams" and "Hooper's Excelsior Dressed Beef and Beef Extract" are trumpeted from newspaper, bill-board, and blank wall throughout the land.

Her elder sister had married a Papal duke, under the impression that he was a noble of ancient and proud family. To her horror, to her family's humiliation, and to her friends' hilarity, it came out that the Duke of Valdonomia was the son of a Swiss hog-packer of as humble origin as Umzi Hooper, and of less than one-fifth his wealth. The family longed to possess a genuine nobleman, and Jane—a devourer of the English novels which are written by the middle classes for the middle classes about the upper classes—seemed to be in sympathy with her father's and mother's ambition, and keenly eager to become a "real lady." It was assumed by her set that Frothingham had come



for her—the newspapers hinted as much several times each week.

But Frothingham, grown extraordinarily sensitive, shied at the amazing high heels on which she tottered like a cripple, at the skin-like fit of her clothes, at the suspicious brilliance of her cheeks, and blackness of her brows and lashes. Whenever she spoke to him suddenly in her shrill dialect he felt as if a file had been drawn across his pneumogastric nerve. And she constantly used a slang expression which seemed to him—in her—the essence of vulgarity. She could not speak ten sentences without saying that she or somebody or everybody had nearly or quite "thrown a fit."

It struck him as the biting irony of Fate that the woman whom of all he knew well in America he least approved should be the one who was frankly throwing herself at his head in his hour of desperation. When he learned that her father was an Englishman born and bred in the "lower middle class," he felt that he had solved the problem of the family's eagerness to get him. "That's why the old beggar almost cringes as he talks to me," he said to himself. "Confound their impudence!" And the next time he met Hooper he treated him, not as an American and an equal, but as an Englishman and an inferior. And Amzi at once fell into his "place," just as a tram horse, though elevated to be a coach horse, will halt at one ring of a bell. "It's in the blood," thought Frothingham. "It can't be hid or got out." But—he didn't venture the experiment with the daughter.

The climax came one morning when he met her by chance in the Lake Park Drive. She was perched high on a red and black dogcart, in which she was driving a bay and a grey tandem. Her hat was the biggest he had seen her wear, and she was swathed in a silver-grey dust-coat with a red embroidered collar. She stopped, and invited him to join her.

"I needed you to complete my turn-

out," she said, when they were under way.

Her dazzling smile took part of the edge off her unconscious insolence—or was it conscious? He found her a puzzle, with her flashes of good taste and flashes of good sense, with her wit that seemed accidental and her folly that seemed her real self.

He set his teeth, and tried to think only of how much "I need her to complete *my* turnout," and of how pretty she was—for there was no denying her beauty, or her style, for that matter, in spite of its efflorescence. He saw that everyone was looking at them, but he did not appreciate that his own striking costume and his eyeglass were as magnetic as were her hat, her bright skin, and her dust-coat with its gaudy collar. She was supremely happy. The most conspicuous girl in Chicago driving with the most conspicuous man, in the most conspicuous trap, and on the most conspicuous highway. What more could a young woman ask?

"Wonder why everyone stares so?" she said, with deliberate intent to provide an opening for compliment. She wished to hear him say the flattering things she was thinking about herself.

"I fancy they're staring at what I can't take my eyes off," he said. "You *do* look swift this morning."

"Swift! I don't like that!" She was frowning. "You Englishmen come over here and think you can say what you please."

"I can't see where's the harm in telling a girl she's pretty and well got up, and looks a stunner."

"That isn't what 'swift' means in Chicago."

"Really! You don't say! That's what it means in London."

"But you're not in London."

"No." His tone strongly suggested a wish that he were.

"Wouldn't it be jolly if this were Hyde Park!" she exclaimed.

He did not show enthusiasm at this;

but then his face was made to suppress, not express, emotion.

"I simply adore London," she went on. "It ain't bad—for a while, now and then."

"There's so much atmosphere about London—I don't mean the fog and soot. Here they're all crazy about making money, and working, and all those kind of things. Whereas, over there, everybody's for having a good time and—all those kind of things. Sometimes I think I'll throw a fit if I don't get away from here."

He looked glum, then brightened. Yes, she was tremendously pretty, and her mouth was like a red-ripe cherry; yes, she might be toned down into a fairly decent countess. "They're quick to adapt themselves, these American girls. The minute she sees Evelyn she'll begin to learn."

"I don't see how you stand it," she continued. "When are you going away? Not that I sha'n't be sorry. You've been awfully nice to me, and I like to see a really well-dressed man once in a while."

"Ah! I don't mind it here." He paused for full a minute, then said: "And I'd like it, you know, if I could take you with me when I go." He followed this speech with a slow turning of the head until his eyeglass was full upon her. "By Jove! her colour's genuine!" he said to himself.

She had been happy a few minutes before; now she was all thrills and palings, and flushings of ecstasy. She glanced at her conquest with sparkling eyes and laughing lips. She made him forget what "bad form" he had been thinking her.

"Is that a joke?" she asked, as if she were assuming that it was.

"We don't go in for joking about that sort of thing where I come from," he drawled.

"But you oughtn't to have said it here."

She was radiant, but her hands were

trembling. It seemed most romantic to her, quite like a chapter out of a novel. Genuine aristocracy, that not only recognised itself, but also was recognised by everybody, seemed to her as dream-like as fairyland.

"If you'll drive home I'll ask you again there," he continued.

And he did, and she accepted him; and he was half-way to Barney's before he came from the spell of her fresh young beauty and her frank admiration of him, and began to think of Nelly and to see Jeanne from Nelly's standpoint again.

At that moment Jeanne was busily telephoning her engagement to her intimates, her head full of castles, and coronets, and crests, and peeresses' robes. It seemed to her that she could not wait to begin her triumph—the congratulations of friends, the receptions, dinners, dances in honour of her and her fiancé, the flare of newspaper brasses, the big wedding, and the crescendo of her gorgeous entry into English society as Countess of Frothingham. Cinderella was no more enraptured when the prince lifted her from the ashes than was Jenny Hooper, with her ill-fed and extravagant imagination, her ill-informed and earnest misconception of life and of "being somebody."

"And he's coming to see you to-morrow, Pa," she said to Amzi Hooper, after delighting his ears with the great news. "He says your consent is necessary before it's announced."

"I guess he and I won't quarrel over it, Jenny," replied her father. "If it suits you, I can stand him."

Frothingham came the next afternoon and made his formal request. Mr. Hooper shook hands with him cordially.

"I guess my girl knows what she's about," said he. "I'm pleased to have you as a son."

"Thanks," replied Frothingham. He could not altogether banish from his manner the instinctive haughtiness of



English upper class for English lower class.

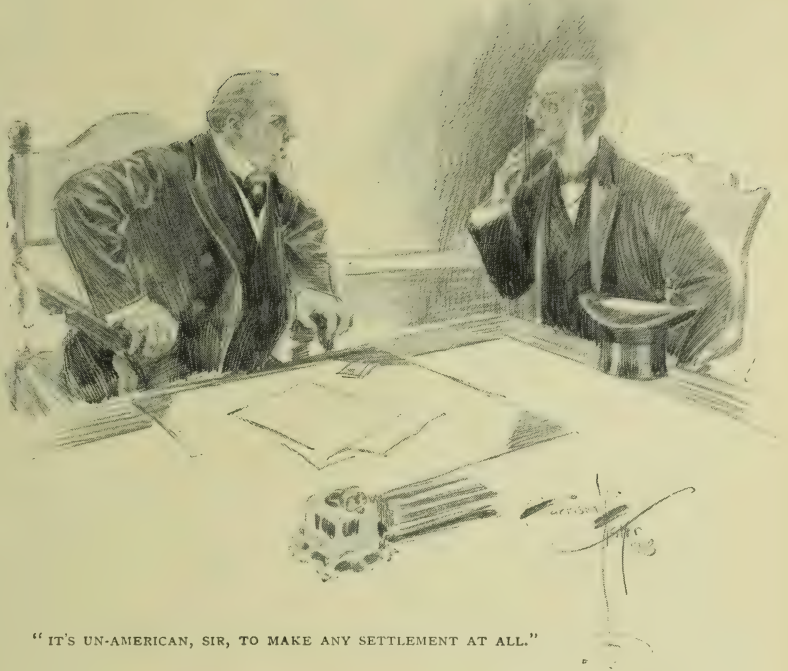
"When could you receive my representative?—Or shall I send him to someone who represents you?"

Mr. Hooper looked embarrassed, and rubbed his jaw-bone vigorously with his thumb and forefinger.

"Yes—yes—certainly—any time you say. I'll talk to him myself. Can he come to-morrow? I don't think it'll take him long to satisfy me you're all right."

Frothingham stared, thinking, "Blast his impudence!" He said only, "To-morrow, at eleven, then."

Frothingham's "representative" was Lawrence, attorney to the British Consulate at Chicago, a brother of Gerald Boughton's mother. He had come to America thirty years before because he could make a living there, and could not make a living at home. He had renounced allegiance to the British throne because by doing so his income was doubled. But at heart he regarded himself as a British subject, and, while he pretended to be an American, was so savagely critical of things American that everyone disliked him. He wore the long, slim side-whiskers which were the fashion when he left home; he talked with the lisp then affected as the "hall-mark" of a gentleman. He disliked Americans; he despised Anglo-Americans of the Hooper type. Hooper him-



self he loathed as an intolerable upstart, successful where he, of the "upper class," was barely able to keep chin above water.

When he came into Hooper's study at the hour fixed by Frothingham, he was an accurate representation of the supercilious, frozen-faced "swell" of the Piccadilly district a quarter of a century before. Hooper knew that he was of the "upper class," but had not the faintest deference for him. Hooper had been Americanised to the extent of caring nothing for mere family. It took a title to stir his dormant instincts of servility. The untitled Lawrence was a man to be judged by American standards, as he understood them. Lawrence was not a millionaire, and not on the way toward that goal of every rational ambition. Hooper, therefore, had no more respect for him than he had for any other "failure."

"You've come to explain about the Earl of Frothingham," began Hooper, in the arrogant voice he used at business. "But it's not necessary. I'm well informed as to Lord Frothingham's family, and am satisfied he's what he represents himself to be."

Lawrence combed his long, lean "Dundrearys" with his slim white fingers. The joy of battle gleamed in his eyes.

"I can't imagine," he replied—he had a broad accent and a drawl, said "cawn't" and "fawncy"—"why you should fancy I came here to insult Lord Frothingham, whose representative I have the honour to be."

"Insult! What do you mean, Mr. Lawrence?" demanded Hooper, his voice courageous, but not his eyes.

Lawrence felt he had been right in thinking that no American would negotiate for the purchase of a title unless he were at bottom a "grovelling snob."

"There could not be a question of Lord Frothingham's character," he said. "And as for his family, there's none more illustrious in England."

"Certainly—certainly. I've admitted all that. I assumed that Lord Frothingham was sending you through over-anxiety—not unnatural, when he's so far from home."

"My business with you, Mr. Hooper," continued Lawrence, "relates to settlements."

Hooper's pretence—"the shallow device of a bargain-hunter"—disgusted him.

Hooper waved his hand—a broad, thick, stumpy-fingered hand.

"Oh, I've no doubt Lord Frothingham will do the right thing by my daughter. And besides, I intend to do something for her. No one ever accused Amzi Hooper of stinginess."

"That is gratifying," said Lawrence. "We shall, no doubt, have not the slightest difficulty in reaching an understanding. What, may I ask, is the—aw—extent of the settlement you purpose

to make—upon your daughter and—and Lord Frothingham?"

Hooper's face grew red.

"You may *ask*, sir, but I'll not answer. I'm not in the habit of discussing my private affairs with *anybody*."

Lawrence was angry also. "The fellow's taking me for a fool," he thought. But he knew he must control himself, so he answered smoothly:—

"This is extraordinary—most extraordinary, Mr. Hooper. You have had some experience—aw—in foreign marriages——"

Hooper dropped sullenly before this poisoned shaft.

"And," continued Lawrence, "you must know that settlements are the matter of course."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Hooper, pounding the desk. "I know nothing of the sort! When my eldest daughter married they talked to me about settlements, but I refused to have anything to do with it"

Lawrence—in fact, all Chicago—knew that Hooper, who was not nearly so rich then, had settled a quarter of a million upon the Papal nobleman and half a million on his daughter, and had engaged to settle a quarter of a million more upon the first male child of the marriage.

"We should, of course, not be satisfied with the settlements you made upon the Duke of Valdonomia," said he, ignoring Hooper's falsehood.

Hooper winced, looked bluster, thought better of it, said quietly:—

"You've been misinformed, Mr. Lawrence. I made no settlements. But I gave the young people enough to set them up comfortably."

"Lord Frothingham's position forbids him to consider any such arrangement as that, Mr. Hooper. You know how it is with the great families. They have station, rank, tradition to maintain. They——"

"I won't bribe any man to marry my daughter. That ain't the American way."



This was said, not fiercely, but, on the contrary, in a conciliatory tone and manner.

Lawrence sneered—inwardly—at this "cheap clap-trap," and said :—

"That's sound—and eminently creditable to you, sir. But you will bear in mind that Lord Frothingham is an English nobleman, the head of a distinguished family, and that your daughter is about to become his countess—an Englishwoman, the mother of a line of English noblemen. Do I make myself clear?"

"Perfectly—perfectly; and I've not the least objection to doing what's right. I want to make it clear that I'm giving only out of generosity and affection, and a desire to see my girl properly established."

"No one who knows you will doubt that," said Lawrence, so blandly that Hooper could find no fault—could not understand why he was irritated. "And now that we're on common ground, I hope you'll give me some—aw—data, so that I may draw up the necessary papers."

"Has Frothingham any debts?" asked Hooper, abruptly, after a thoughtful pause.

"There are about fifteen thousand pounds of personal obligations," replied Lawrence, carelessly, "and a matter of perhaps a hundred thousand pounds as a charge on the entailed estate. I understand the entailed part is all that's left; but the estates can be—should be—restored to what they were until a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago."

"Um!" muttered Hooper.

"The debt represents, I believe," continued Lawrence, "the wild oats and careless management of previous generations. The present Earl has been—remarkably steady, they tell me, considering his station and opportunities, and the example of his father and grandfather."

Hooper had read, with an attention that made his memory leech-like, every

word of every sketch of Frothingham and the Gordon-Beauvais family in the Chicago papers. Lawrence's aristocratic allusions were, therefore, full of suggestion, and moved him profoundly.

"Well," said he, "I should say, in round numbers, that a million would straighten the young man out, and set them housekeeping in good style."

There was a queer gleam in Lawrence's eyes as he replied :—

"Very handsome, Mr. Hooper. Most satisfactory. Your daughter can take the position in England to which the Earl's rank entitles her." He looked as if he were reflecting. Then, as if thinking aloud: "Let me see—a million pounds—five million——"

Hooper sprang to his feet.

"You misunderstood me, Mr. Lawrence!" he protested angrily, but nervously. "My daughter will have that—perhaps more than that—ultimately. But I meant dollars, not pounds."

Lawrence put on an expression of amazement.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Hooper, but really—*really*—you can't mean that. Two hundred thousand pounds would hardly fetch them even. They'd have nothing to live on."

"Oh, of course, I don't mean that I'd not give them anything in addition. We were talking only of settlements."

"Certainly. And you must see, Mr. Hooper, that it would be impossible for us to accept any settlement so inadequate. Some misfortune might overtake you, and—you would be unable to carry out your present generous intentions."

"A million dollars is a big sum of money. It looks even bigger in England than here."

"But you are making a great alliance. A million dollars is a small sum in the circumstances—I mean, in view of the necessity of enabling your daughter to take all that her position as Countess of Frothingham entitles her to."

"Permit me to ask," said Hooper, with some sarcasm, but not enough to conceal his anxiety, "what did Lord Frothingham expect in the way of settlement?"

The multi-millionaire had developed two powerful passions with age—avarice and social ambition. These were now rending each the other, and both were rending him.

"Lord Frothingham, of course, did not discuss the matter with me. A gentleman is, naturally, delicate in matters of money. He simply stated the posture of his affairs, and left me in full charge. When I suggested to him that eight hundred thousand—*pounds*—would be adequate, he protested that that was too much. 'I wish Mr. Hooper to appreciate that it is his daughter I want,' said he. 'Make the least possible conditions. I'd be glad to marry her without a penny if my position permitted. It's hard to have to consider such things at this time,' he said. 'I'm sure we can pull through with seven hundred thousand.' I did not, and do not, agree with him, but I assented because I knew that you would liberally supplement the settlements."

Every sentence in that speech exasperated Mr. Hooper—perhaps Lawrence's persistence in expressing himself in pounds instead of in dollars most of all. Pounds made the huge sum demanded seem small, made his resistance seem mean and vulgar. He reflected for several minutes. "I won't do it," he said in a sudden gust of temper. "Half that is my final figure. I'll settle the obligations—the five hundred and seventy thousand dollars—and I'll entail five hundred thousand and give Jenny five hundred thousand for her lifetime, it to go afterward to the younger children."

Lawrence combed his whiskers with his fine fingers, shaking his head slowly as he did so. "But, Mr. Hooper——"

"That's final," interrupted Hooper. "It's bad enough—it's shameful—it's

un-American, sir, to make any settlement at all."

At "un-American," Lawrence took advantage of the fact that Hooper was not looking at him to indulge in a glance of contemptuous amusement. "Nobody but an American," he said to himself, "could have dragged 'un-American' into such a discussion as this. The cad is dickering over his daughter like an old-clothes dealer over a bag of rags."

Hooper was talking again—talking loudly: "Not a cent more! Not a blamed cent more! If they need more after they're married, let 'em come to me for it. They'll get it. But I ain't fool enough to make 'em independent of me. I ain't going to give 'em a chance to forget the hand that feeds 'em. No, sir; I want my daughter to continue to love me and think of me."

There was no affectation in Lawrence's astonishment at this view of affection and the way to keep it. "Poor devil," he said to himself pityingly, "he's been so perverted by his wealth that he actually doesn't see he's taking the very course that'll make his children hate him." But he ventured only, "I'm certain, sir, from what I know of your daughter and Lord Frothingham that money could have no influence with them one way or the other."

Hooper smiled cynically. "It's human nature," he said. "The hand that feeds is the hand that's licked. I'll give 'em all they need whenever they need it. Do you suppose I've no pride in my daughter, in seeing that she makes a good appearance over there? But a million and a half is my outside figure for settlements."

"Practically less than a hundred thousand over and above the debts," replied Lawrence, irritatingly reverting to pounds. "That is, about four thousand a year for them to live on."

"Forty to fifty thousand a year, including Jenny's income," corrected Hooper, standing up for dollars. "And



while I don't promise, still, if they behave, they can count on as much more from me."

"Nine thousand a year," said Lawrence, translating into pounds, "would hardly keep up Beauvais Hall in a pinched fashion. It would leave nothing for restoring the property; the Hall, for example, needs fifty thousand pounds at once to restore it."

The reasonableness, the unanswerableness of this presentation of the case exasperated Hooper. "They'll have to look to me afterward for that," he said angrily. "I've said my last word."

But Lawrence didn't believe him. He saw that, though avarice was uppermost for the moment, the "cad's craving" was a close second—then there was the daughter's aid. She would have something to say to her father when she knew of the hitch in the negotiations. He rose. "There's nothing further at present, Mr. Hooper. I shall be compelled strongly to advise Lord Frothingham against going on and engaging himself. I cannot do otherwise consistently, with my duty as the, as it were, guardian for the moment of his dignity and the dignity of his house. It may be that he will disregard my advice. But I don't see how he can, careless in sordid things and impetuous though he is. The prospect for an unhappy marriage would be too clear. Good-morning, sir."

Hooper shook hands with him lingeringly. Avarice forbade him to speak. "The Earl will come to your terms," it and shrewdness assured him. "If he don't the deal is still open, anyhow." His parting words were, "Give my regards to the young man. Tell him we hope to see him as usual, no matter how this affair comes out."

"The coarse brute," muttered Lawrence, as he stood without the doors of the granite palace. "The soul of a ham-seller, of a pig-sticker." And he took



"THAT'S ANCIENT HISTORY."

out his handkerchief and affectedly wiped the hand which Hooper had shaken. "Always a nasty business, this, of American upstarts buying into our nobility. If they weren't a lot of callous traders and money-grabbers they couldn't do it. And they usually negotiate at first hand, so that they can drive a closer bargain. And their best society, too! Beastly country—no wonder the women want to be traded out of it into civilisation."

XVIII.

There was a family council at the Hoopers' after luncheon that day—Mr. Hooper, his wife, and Jeanne. The two women followed Hooper from the dining-room into his study, where he was pulling sullenly at his cigar, and awaiting the attack. It was his wife who began:—

"Do you know why Lord Frothingham sent word he couldn't come to lunch, Pa? Jenny here is worried about it."

Mr. Hooper grunted. Finally he said:—

"I'm willing to do anything in reason to please Jenny. I don't approve of this title business. It ain't American. But as long as the young fellow has turned her head I was not disposed to stand in the way." He frowned fiercely. "But I tell you flat I won't be held up! And that fellow he sent here this morning was a plain highwayman."

Mrs. Hooper and Jeanne looked significantly each at the other. They had had many talks about his growing stinginess, and they suspected him at once

"What did he want?" inquired Mrs. Hooper.

"I don't propose to talk this thing over before Jenny. It's disgraceful that she should have gone into such a business. It ain't right that she should know about such things."

Jeanne's eyes filled with tears.

"And I've told all the girls!" she exclaimed. "Everybody knows it. I can't back out now. The whole town'd be laughing at us. I'd be ashamed ever to show my face in the street again. You don't want to break my heart, do you, Pa?"

"You've made a sweet mess of it!" snarled her father. "You ought to have had better sense than to have told anybody till the business side of it was settled. I warned your Ma about that—I knew what was coming. Now, here you two've gone and given him the whip hand."

"She got at the telephone before she told me," said Mrs. Hooper.

Neither she nor her husband suspected that Jeanne had thought of just this emergency of a wrangle over settlements, and had decided that the best way to overcome her father's avarice was to put him in a position from which he could not recede. If Frothingham had not insisted on liberal settlements, she would have prompted him to it. She was no more eager than was he to embark with small supplies in the hold when it was possible to lay in supplies a-plenty. And as her father had acted all her life upon his principle of paternal affection—"The hand that feeds is the hand that's licked"—she saw no harm in guiding her conduct toward him by another principle from the practical code. As she was about to engage in business, wasn't it common-sense to get as large a capital as she could? "We can't back out now," she repeated tearfully, watching him shrewdly through her tears.

"A pretty mess!" growled her father. But he was not really offended, partly because he was fond of his daughter and would have forgiven her almost anything, partly because he understood and sympathised with her eagerness to proclaim her triumph, chiefly because, now that he had thought it over, he was ready to accept Frothingham's terms. "The hope of getting more and the need of it will keep 'em tame," he reasoned. And he said, addressing the two women: "When that Lawrence fellow comes again to-morrow, as I'm dead sure he will, I'll close the matter. But you two keep your hands off!"

As soon as her father and mother were out of the way she went into the library and called up the Barneys. "Is Lord Frothingham there?" she asked.

"I'll put you on the switch to his room," was the reply. And presently a voice she recognised as Hutt's said: "Who wishes to speak to 'Is Lordship?"



"Say that Miss Hooper's at the telephone."

There was a pause, a murmur of voices—she was sure one of them was Frothingham's. Then Hutt answered: "'Is Lordship hain't 'ere just now, ma'am. Hany message, ma'am?"

She was trembling with alarm. "Just tell him that I called up, and that I'd like to speak to him when he comes in"—this in a rather shaky voice, for a great fear was gathering in around her, a fear that he had become offended at her father's stinginess and bartering and bargaining, and had decided to withdraw.

She wandered uneasily from room to room. She sat at the telephone several times—once she had the receiver off the hook before she changed her mind about trying to reach him. She ordered her victoria and got ready for the street, to drive about in the hope of accidentally meeting him. At the door she changed her mind again. As she was turning back a boy came by, shouting an extra—"All about the Earl of Frothingham! Big sensation!" She saw that the boy knew who she was, knew that she was supposed to be engaged to Frothingham, was clamoring in that neighbourhood because he thought sales would be brisker there. She fled into the house—but sent a servant out by the basement way to buy the paper.

The headlines were large and black. Frothingham, the story ran, had got into debt in England so deeply that his creditors found that he could not pay more than a few pence in the pound; they had consulted as to ways and means of recovering, had organised themselves into a syndicate, had put up five thousand pounds to "finance" him for a hunt for a rich wife in America. "And," concluded the account, "this exposure comes barely in time to block his attempt to marry the beautiful daughter of one of the richest meat packers in Chicago, moving in our smartest smart set."

She did not know that this tale was a deliberately false diversion of the facts about a syndicated German prince who had visited Chicago several years before and had almost married there. The truth as to his enterprise had just come out on the other side through the collapse of the Rontivogli syndicate, and the newspaper, relying for immunity on Frothingham's aloneness and on his well-understood mercenary designs, had substituted his name for the German's. She read and believed. She had known from the outset that his main motive was money. But she had succeeded in disguising this unsightly truth in the same flowers of her crudely romantic imagination in which she disguised the truth as to her craving for a coronet. Now it was as if the flowers had been torn away to the last concealing petal and had left exposed things more hideous than she thought were there.

She hid her face and cried a little. "I despise him. Besides, if I went on and married him, what would people say?"

It would have taken finer scales than those available for weighing human motives to decide which of the two reasons embodied in those two sentences was the heavier. She dried her eyes and sat with her elbow on the table and her chin in her hand.

"That's the best thing to do, every way I look at it," she said aloud slowly at the end of half an hour's thought.

She went to the telephone, called up the offices of the Great Western and Southern Railway, asked and got the General Manager. "Is that you, Mr. Burster? Is that you, Tom? Meet me in the parlours of the Auditorium right away." And she rang off and telephoned to the stable for her victoria.

Ten minutes later she was driving down the avenue in her largest, most beplumed black hat and a pale blue carriage-coat that produced the wonted effect of her public appearances. Burster once said to her: "Jeanne,

you're the only thing on earth that can stop traffic in the streets of Chicago. You can do in two seconds more than a blizzard could do in a week."

She returned at half-past five. Her father and mother were in the front sitting-room upstairs, gloomy as the lake in the dusk of a cloudy day. She entered, whistling and tilting her big hat first over her right eye, then over her left.

"Don't look so cheerful," she said, patting her mother on the cheek, and pulling her father's beard.

He tried to scowl, but it was a failure; and his voice was not in the least formidable, as he said:—

"A pretty mess you've got yourself into, Miss, with your telephoning."

"What telephoning?" she asked, with a start.

"Tattling your engagement."

"Oh!"

She threw herself into a chair and laughed.

"Your father telephoned to Mr. Lawrence after he left us——" began her mother.

"What did you do that for, Pa?" she interrupted. "He'll think we haven't any pride."

"You ungrateful, thoughtless child! I did it for you."

"What did Mr. Lawrence say?"

Her father hesitated, and his face showed how he hated to inflict upon his daughter the pain he thought his words would cause. "He said it was useless to continue our discussion, as Lord Frothingham had definitely and finally decided not to renew his proposal." The old man's voice almost broke, as he went on: "Jenny, here's a note that came a few minutes ago. I think the address is in Frothingham's handwriting."

Neither he nor her mother dared to look at her as she was hearing these awful disclosures of the downfall of her hopes and the impending brutalities to her pride and vanity. She picked up

the note, opened it slowly, read it—a few polite, formal sentences, setting forth that he was "yielding to the insuperable obstacles interposed by your father."

She dropped the sheet and pirouetted round the room, in and out between the chairs occupied by her frightened parents. They thought her suddenly gone mad from the shock.

"Who says I ain't the luckiest girl on earth?" she exclaimed.

"What are you talking about, Jenny?" demanded her mother, sharply.

"Why, I married Tom Burster half an hour ago. He's putting the notices in all the papers for to-morrow morning. Everybody'll think I changed my mind and shook Frothingham. And I did, too!"

"Jenny!" exclaimed her father. "Tom Burster!"

"And he's coming here to dinner, if you don't object," she continued. "If you do, why I'll join him and we'll go away and give you a chance to cool off." She caught her father by the beard. "What do you say, Daddy? Say yes, or I'll pull."

"Yes," replied her father with a huge sigh of relief. His daughter was contented; her and their vanity would be spared; Tom Burster would not demand or want a dower; he was not only independent, but also one of the most forward young "self-made" rich men in Chicago. "You've got more sense than all the rest of the family put together," he exclaimed proudly, patting her on the head.

And in an absent, reflective tone she said: "I always felt I'd have some use for Tom sooner or later."

## XIX.

Frothingham's abrupt change of tactics had been caused by a cablegram from Evelyn which reached him at the Barneys even as his diplomatic agent was in the heat and toil of the negotiation with Amzi Hooper. It read:—



"Break off everything and return. Have written you New York. Best possible news. Gwen sends love."

"Why didn't she say what it was?" he wondered. And he decided that it must be news of too private a nature to be trusted to the telegraph station at Beauvais. Why had she written if he was to go at once? "I suppose," he concluded, "she was afraid I mightn't obey orders. 'Gwen sends love'—that must mean that the news is about me and Gwen."

But he had no uplifting of spirits—instead, he felt a sense of impending misfortune. He called up Lawrence's office, and told one of the clerks that he wished Lawrence to call him as soon as he came in. In a few minutes Lawrence was relating over the wire the favourable progress of the negotiation.

"It's off," said Frothingham. "I want nothing more to do with it. I'm glad it's in good form for the break. I can drop it decently."

This so delighted Lawrence that he laughed aloud. "Hooper's certain to send for me," he said. "I'll give him the shock of his life."

Frothingham cautioned him against any transgression of the most courteous politeness, then went down to luncheon—with Nelly, alone. While she was talking and he looking, all in a flash he understood why the "best possible news" from home depressed him, why

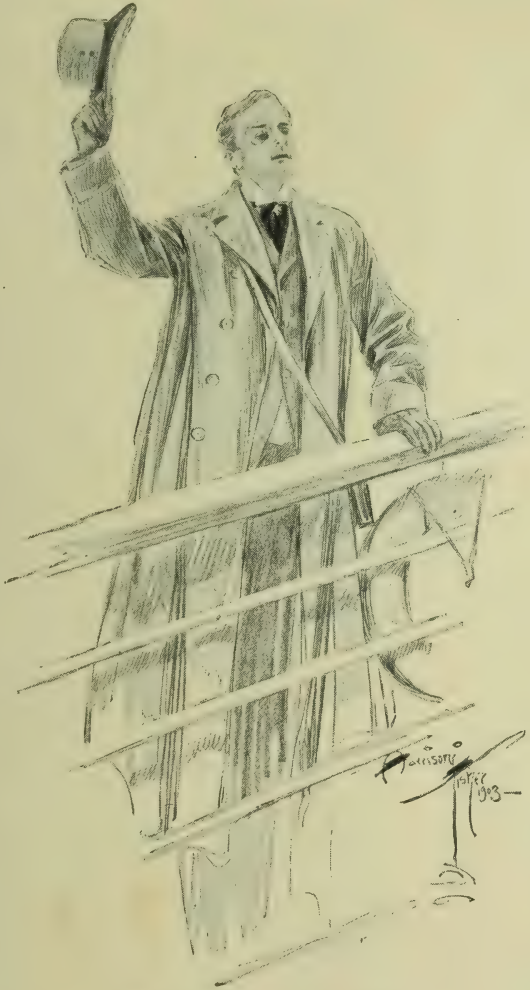
"Gwen sends love" did not elate him. He asked Nelly to take him to her school.

"Oh, you wouldn't be interested," she said.

But he insisted, and they set out immediately after luncheon. As they went—in a street car—she explained her work:—

When her mother lay dying she said to the man beside whom she had worked for thirty-six years, mostly cloud and rain: "Henry, I don't want a big, showy monument over me. If you should do something for me, build a school of some kind, a school where girls can

be taught how to be useful wives and mothers, instead of spending their whole lives at learning." And Nelly's father had put by money, a large sum each year, until his daughter's education was finished. Then he had



"HE LIFTED HIS HAT, AND BOWED."

said to her, "I want you to help me carry out your ma's memorial." And he turned over to her a mass of plans and hints and schemes which he had been accumulating for seven years. "Get up a plan," he had said, "on the lines your ma would have liked. It's a woman's work—it's your natural work. I'll supply the money." And after two years' labour, one year of it abroad, she had perfected a scheme for a great school where several hundred girls could be instructed in all that a woman as a woman should know—housework, sewing, cooking, shopping, marketing, the elements of business and of art, the care of babies, the training and education of children. And she had so planned it that the girls could and should support themselves while they were learning.

Frothingham did not take his eyes from her face as she talked. She seemed to him the most wonderful, the noblest human being in the world. "A fine, a beautiful idea," he said. "But arn't you afraid of spoiling those girls for working-men's wives? You're educating entirely too much in this country, I should say, as it is. You're making the lower classes restless and discontented. They'll pull everything down about your ears the first thing you know."

Nelly smiled—he saw that she was not seeing him at all, was looking far, far past him. "I'm not worrying about the consequences," she said. "If we did that we should never move. You must remember that we haven't any classes here, but are all of one class—we differ in degree, but not in kind. One can't look into the future. I only know it was intended for the light to shine on the whole human race and that it's our duty to help all we can. And knowledge is light, and ignorance is darkness, isn't it? I'm not afraid of light anywhere. Whether it's little or much, it's better than darkness."

He looked at her strangely. "I had never thought of that," he said in a low voice. Then, after a moment: "How

good you are! I didn't know there was anybody in the world like you. How generous of you to give your life to these people!"

"No—no!"—she protested. They were walking now through a maze of homely streets, lined with flat-houses large and small, and odorous of strong-smelling cookery, of decaying food, of stale whisky and beer—a typical tenement district. "When I first began on this scheme," she went on, "I thought as you do. But I soon saw how false, how foolishly false, that was. And if I had continued to think as at first, if I had gone into the work to patronise and to feed my vanity, I should have injured myself and all whom I wished to help. I should have made a snob of myself and parasites of them."

She paused and into her eyes came a look which he thought "glorious." She went on: "But, fortunately, I got the right sort of guidance from the very start. And I discovered that I had more to learn than these people. I was actually more ignorant than they." She turned her face toward him. "Did you ever think," she asked, "what would become of you if you had all the props taken from under you, and were cast upon the world and were forced to make the fight alone—without a penny or a friend or a relative or any outside help of any kind?"

"Thought of it? Well, rather!" he exclaimed. "And I know what would happen to me—jolly quick!"

"That was my first discovery—about myself. I found that I was in the world without any fit equipment to live. I found that if the props were taken from under me I'd be no match for the working-people—that I'd perish, or else have to live on the charity of rich people by doing the sort of pottering work they give the poor of their own class. And I said to myself: 'You are a fine human being, aren't you, to pose as the superior of those who are independent and self-respecting? You call them





"AS THEY WENT—IN A STREET CAR—SHE EXPLAINED HER WORK.

ignorant, yet they are conforming to Nature's laws and to the conditions of life infinitely better than you, with your boasted intelligence and your fancied refinement.' I saw that I was not a real woman, as my mother had been, but was only a parasite on the labour and the intelligence of others."

"And what did you do?"

"I went to school with my girls. And"—her face lighted up with enthusiasm—"oh, you don't know what a—a magnificent—sensation it is to be conscious that one can swim alone on the sea of life without fear of drowning or of having to call for help. You spoke as if I were giving these people something. Why, I owe everything to them! It is they that gave and are giving. And I am, and always shall be, in their debt."

He tried to think of some satirical phrase with which to lessen the impression what she had said was making upon him. But he could only blink into the flooding light which seemed to him to surround her, and to blaze upon his pettiness and worthlessness, and the tawdriness of all upon which his life had been based. In his own country—in his surroundings of alternate dulness and dissipation—his naturally good mind had become a drowsy marsh, with pale lights gleaming in it occasionally here and there. Unconsciously, he had been slowly rousing ever since he landed in New York. The people he had met were like enough to those he had met at home, and also like enough to the people of the real America from which they were offshoots, to form for him a mental bridge on which he could pass from his England of narrow and bigoted caste to Nelly's America of alert and intelligent and self-respecting, level-eyed humanity. And he was now feeling in this restless Chicago the fierce impact of energies and aspirations of which he had had no conception, of which he could never have a clear conception. Through the

eyes of this earnest, unaffected girl, with her lived ideal of self-forgetfulness, he had been getting confused, dazzling glimpses of a new world.

But he did clearly see and feel that he loved her. And she now saw in his curiously changed face what was in his mind. She looked away instantly—her expression was uneasy, almost frightened. "Here we are—at the school," she said nervously as they turned a corner and came in sight of three great buildings—plain yet attractive—which faced three sides of a broad lawn, in the centre of which a large and most artistic fountain was playing.

He never could give a clear account of that school. He remembered the manager—a Mr. Worthington, with a strong and serious, yet anything but solemn face, with rather homely features except a pair of extraordinary eyes. He remembered many class-rooms where all sorts of feminine enterprises were going forward with energetic informality. He remembered many girls—uncommonly clean, bright, well-dressed girls with agreeable voices and manners. He remembered many smiles and other evidences of health and spirits. He remembered many babies—all in one big, sunny room, chirping and crowing and gurgling, balancing on uncertain little lumps of feet or crawling toilsomely. "Practice babies," Nelly called them, and he thought, "If this is the way her girls succeed with mere 'practice babies,' what won't they make of their own?" Finally, he remembered—Nelly. All his other memories were a hazy background for her tall, graceful figure and wonderful, luminous face. Her he never forgot in the smallest detail of look or gesture.

When they were once more in the street, walking toward the car, he began abruptly: "I came over here—to America—because I was ruined—because we were going to be sold up and chucked out in the autumn. I came—I'm ashamed to put it into words—I'd



rather you'd imagine—you can, easy enough. It's often done and nothing's thought of it—at least, on our side of the water. This morning—in fact, just before luncheon—I got a cable from my sister. Our luck has turned, and——"

"I'm very glad," she murmured as he paused.

"I don't wish to go back," he went on impetuously, his drawl gone. "I wish—it's you I want. And I ask you to give me a chance. I don't think I'm such a frightfully bad sort, as men go. And while I'm not fit for you to walk on, where's the man that is? And perhaps if I were less fit I couldn't care for you—all the height from down where I am to up where you are."

The storm which had burst from deep down within him, deeper far than he thought his nature extended, was so sweeping and whirling him that he could not see her.

When she spoke it was in a voice that took away hope, but gently soothing the wound it made. "I'm sorry," she said, "and yet I'm—not. No woman could help being pleased to hear what you've said to me, and hear it from such a man as you are. Oh, yes"—this in answer to his expression—"for I've found out what sort of man lives behind your look of irony and indifference. A so much better man than he lets himself know—or show. And I understand how differently you've been brought up, how different your system is from ours. But——"

She hesitated and somehow he felt that he must give her sympathy instead of asking it.

"You remember, I told you that when I began with the school I had the right sort of help?"

He looked away from her and it was black before him for an instant. "That fairish chap with the eyes—Mr. Worthington?" he asked, cutting his words off sharp.

She nodded, her cheeks bright. "I simply couldn't help it," she said. "He

was what I longed to be. And he didn't preach the things I believed in—he just lived them."

They were silent for a few minutes, then she went on: "I don't want you to misunderstand. He has never even looked—what I'd like him to—to look and say. I don't know whether he cares or not—perhaps not. Sometimes I think he cares only for the work, and——"

"He does care—I saw it," interrupted Frothingham, and then he was astonished at himself for being so "ridiculously decent."

"I don't know," she said doubtfully. "Thank you for saying so." She looked at him shyly. "You'll think me queer for telling you about it when he has said nothing to me."

"I understand why you tell me," Frothingham answered. "It was—like you." He smiled faintly, his frequent, self-satirising smile. "Don't mind me. I'm used to bad luck. I take to it like a duck to water."

Nelly's instinct told her that she had said enough, and they walked in silence. When she spoke again it was of the dance to which they were going that night. An hour and a half later as they were separating for dinner he said earnestly: "Thank you for what you said. And thank you—even more—for what you didn't say."

## XX.

On the way to Mrs. Grafton's ball that night he sent Evelyn a cablegram, asking her to cable him a hundred and fifty pounds he needed to enable him to pay Wallingford, and fixing the next day for his sailing. He might have sailed three days earlier, but he wished to get her letter and so not carry an unsatisfied curiosity on a six days' voyage.

At the ball everyone was talking of the Frothingham "exposure" and of Jenny Hooper's marriage. The "exposure" had appeared in but two editions

of the "yellow" that invented it. "Wick" Barney had seen it and had lost not a moment in forcing its suppression and a denial, and in warning the other papers. He said nothing to Frothingham, and Frothingham did not know of it then, or indeed until several years had passed. But even if it had not been suppressed and had been everywhere believed, Frothingham's social position would not have suffered. His title was genuine and his family and his position at home were of the best—more, American fashionable society never asks about upper-class foreigners who come to it for no apparent, or rather avowed, purpose. It expects them to be somewhat "queer" in other respects. It assumes that they will be "queer" in money matters—and it has reason for the assumption.

Frothingham did, however, hear of Jenny's marriage—heard of it from Jenny herself. At the Graftons' the dressing-rooms are at opposite ends of the hall from which the grand stairway ascends to the drawing-room and the ballroom. It chanced that Jenny and Frothingham came along this hall from the dressing-rooms at the same time, and, to the delight of the few guests and the many servants who witnessed, met at the foot of the stairway. As Frothingham's face habitually expressed nothing beyond a suggestion that he had nothing to express, he and his eyeglass withstood the shock admirably. Jenny had intended to "cut him dead" the next time she saw him. But as she tottered suddenly into his presence on her monstrous tall heels she was not prepared for a course so foreign to her nature as the cut direct. Before she knew what she was doing or saying she had smiled and nodded. She instantly shifted to a frown; but it was too late—Frothingham had spoken, had subdued her with that "perfectly splendid, so aristocratic" monocle of his. "What's the use of throwing a fit over a thing that's past and done?" she reflected.

"He's all right in his way. And won't it give Tom and everybody a jolt if we enter the ballroom together?"

Frothingham had called her "Miss Hooper." This gave her the opening. "Miss Hooper!" she said with her jauntiest air. "That's ancient history. I ain't been called that for ages and ages. Why, I'm an old married woman—for Chicago."

"Really," said he, thinking it "some stupid, silly sell or other." He was hardly listening. He was more interested in the rope of pearls and diamonds that swung from her neck to far below her waist. The pearls were large, and were once perfect; but each pearl had been mutilated by having a diamond set in it—a very nightmare of sacrifice of beauty and taste in an effort to make more expensive the most expensive.

"Yes, indeed—truly. I'm Mrs.——" She stopped short and gave him a look of horror.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Frothingham with satiric sympathy. "Have you forgotten his name, or did you forget to ask it?"

"No—but I never *thought* of it before—thought how it sounds. My, but it's awful! I'd never in the world have married him if I'd have pronounced it beforehand. Mrs. Burster! Ain't that horrible?" Frothingham had lifted "ain't" from the slough of doubtful grammar to the pinnacle of fashion in fashionable Chicago.

"Oh, I don't know," he drawled, still imagining she was jesting. "It might be worse, mightn't it, now?"

Her eyes flashed at this seeming impertinence. "Yes—it might. It might be Bursted—or 'Busted'—mightn't it?" Then, seeing that her "shot" at his financial condition as described in the newspaper she had read and believed apparently did not touch him, she relented and was in a good humour again. "I've been engaged to Tom for a year or so, on and off," she went on. "When I woke up this morning it came



into my head to marry him. And I did it while your lawyer and papa were squabbling."

She said this so convincingly that she herself began to feel that it was "as good as true."

The news that she and Frothingham were advancing together preceded them to the ballroom, but had not spread far enough from its doors to impair the sensation made by their entrance with every appearance of friendliness. And the much-discussed mystery of that day's doings is here solved for the first time.

The next afternoon Frothingham and Wickham drove up to Barney's door as Nelly and Worthington were arriving on foot. One glance at their faces, and he knew that they understood each the other now.

"All I accomplished," he said to himself mournfully, "was to force the fellow to play his hand. What ripping luck I do bring—other people!"

He paused only long enough to make his passing on seem natural. Presently she followed him to the library, where he was standing on the rug before the closed fireplace, with a cigarette drooping dejectedly from the corner of his mouth. She moved restlessly about the room, evidently seeking a way to begin telling him something.

"I saw it in your face—at the door," he said, in answer to an appealing glance from her.

She put her hand on his arm, and her eyes were wistful.

"I know you did, and I hoped—I thought—I saw in your face that you were generous enough to be glad I'm happy."

"No, I can't say that you did. The most I can do is to bear it—without the grin." He seated himself on the edge of the big table, and looked at her reflectively. "I say," he began at last, "do you see how it's possible to be in love with two at the same time?"

She nodded, smiling a little.

"Yes—I—I think—if I hadn't met someone first—I should have been in love with—someone else."

"That's something," he said, in his satirical drawl. But he kept his eyes down, and his eyelids were trembling. "Do you know," he went on, after a pause full of cigarette smoke, "I've been thinking about—caring for two people, and that sort of thing? I don't mind saying to you—you'll understand, I'm sure—there's a girl over on the other side——"

"I'm so glad!" she exclaimed—and then she wasn't.

"I care for her—in a different way, but it's quite a real way. And, when I go back home, it may be—you know what I wish to say. I'm telling you because I don't wish you to think I'm disloyal to you"—his expression was half-satirical, half-mournful—"or to her either."

"I appreciate your telling me," she said; "but I'd have understood if you hadn't. I believe I recognise a manly man when I see him, and—you know that's what I think you."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I dare say I'm much like other people. I show everyone the side that matches the side they show me."

After a moment he went to her and lifted her hand and kissed it. She stood and turned her face, sweet and friendly, up to him.

"I'd rather you'd kiss *me*," she said.

He winced and paled, and let go her hand.

"No, thanks," he replied. "If you don't mind, I'd rather not."

With this Mr. Barney bustled into the room—no one had ever seen him make a slow movement of any kind. At sight of them standing thus suspiciously, he halted, and, as they flushed and moved apart, he laughed in such a way that Nelly felt impelled to explain:—

"I was talking to Lord Frothingham of my engagement, and he was congratulating me."

"*Bless my soul!*" ejaculated Barney. "This *is* news!"

"I haven't had a chance to tell you, father. It's Mr. Worthington."

Barney seemed depressed.

"Well—I guess he's all right," he said, slowly. "I've got nothing against him. But——"

"And," interrupted Nelly, afraid of her father's frankness, "he was telling me of his engagement."

Barney looked at Frothingham sharply.

"American?" he asked, showing that he wouldn't like it if he got an affirmative answer.

"No—a neighbour of ours in England," replied Frothingham.

"Delighted to hear it. You ought to have been married and settled long ago. I still think you'd have done better to sell your farm over there and settle down here in Chicago." Barney would have scorned to apply such words as estate and plantation to a farm—though he did call his shop an "Emporium."

Wickham went to New York with Frothingham the next day but one; and on the day after they arrived they had Honoria, chaperoned by Mrs. Galloway, at dinner and at the theatre, and, because Wickham insisted, at supper. It was almost two o'clock when they put the two women into their carriage at the Waldorf and went to bed. Frothingham refused to sit up listening to Wickham on Honoria. He was surprised that Wickham had invited her for luncheon the next, or, rather, the same day—was astonished when he found that she had accepted. His last three days in America were spent in studying—and encouraging—an infatuation.

The morning of his departure came, and the steamer which he assumed must be bringing Evelyn's letter, since it had not arrived on Friday, was just getting in. He decided that he would not put off his sailing to get the letter.

"Why wait merely to satisfy my

curiosity? Evelyn sent me over here. She knows what she's about in recalling me." He left Hutt to stay until the last moment on the chance of the mail arriving; he and Wickham went down to the pier—Mrs. Galloway and Honoria and Joe Wallingford and his wife were already there. He had a few sentences aside with Honoria.

"I'm so glad you introduced Mr. Barney to me," she said.

He trained his eyeglass upon her mockingly. "Really! How extraordinary! Precisely what *he* said on Wednesday."

"Don't be a silly ass," protested Honoria in an unconvincing voice. "He's only a big, nice boy. I'm four years older than he. Or, rather, he's four years younger than I—I don't fancy the word old."

"That's as it should be. If a young chap *will* marry, he should be several years the younger. She'll keep him straight and bring him up properly. She'll be patient with his ignorance and know how to handle the reins when he frets or frisks. Good business this, you're planning, Honoria."

"Do you think he likes me?"

"*Likes?* He's positively drivelling. Look at 'im!"

Honoria's glance met Wickham's—he was at the rail, pretending to listen to Catherine. His "drivelling" expression as he came at the call in her eyes seemed to please Honoria mightily. With the last going-ashore gong Hutt came, bringing Evelyn's letter. Frothingham at once read enough of it to interpret her cablegram:—

"As you doubtless know, Georgie's father-in-law died in New York a few weeks ago. He left them I don't know how much—something huge. And George is giving Gwen a dot of three hundred thousand. She was just here with the news—she came to me the instant she heard it. As she was leaving she said 'Won't you give Arthur my love when you write?' It's



the first time she's spoken of you to me since you left. And when I said, 'I'll cable it to him,' she blushed—you should have seen her, Arthur—and heard her say, 'Oh, *thank* you, dear!'"

"Good chap, George," murmured Frothingham. "The right sort clean through. He wouldn't let Gwen and me be cheated as he and Evelyn were. . . . Poor Evelyn! . . . Gwen and me!" He began a sigh that changed into his faint smile of self-mockery. "Just my beastly, rotten luck—not to be sure it's good luck when it finally does come."

He went to the rail, and his glance sought out and rested upon the little group of his friends on the crowded pier across the widening gap between Nelly's land and him. Wickham took Honoria's blue chiffon parasol and waved it; Catherine fluttered her handkerchief. He lifted his hat and bowed. Long after they were lost to him in the merge of the crowd they could make out his loud light tweeds and scarlet bow, and once they caught the flash of a ray of sunlight on his eyeglass—like a characteristic farewell look.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was five o'clock in a late September afternoon. As usual, on the low table

on the porch viewing the Italian garden at Beauvais Hall was the big tea-tray with its array of antique silver and old porcelain, the cake and the toast and the slices of bread and butter. Round it were Evelyn and Gwen and Frothingham—Gwen wearing a riding habit, and Frothingham in the slovenly, baggy flannels of an English gentleman in the seclusion of his country-seat. No one was speaking and the quiet was profound. Presently Evelyn rose and went through the open French window into the drawing-room. Gwen was watching Frothingham; he was watching the peacocks as they strutted with tails spread in splendour.

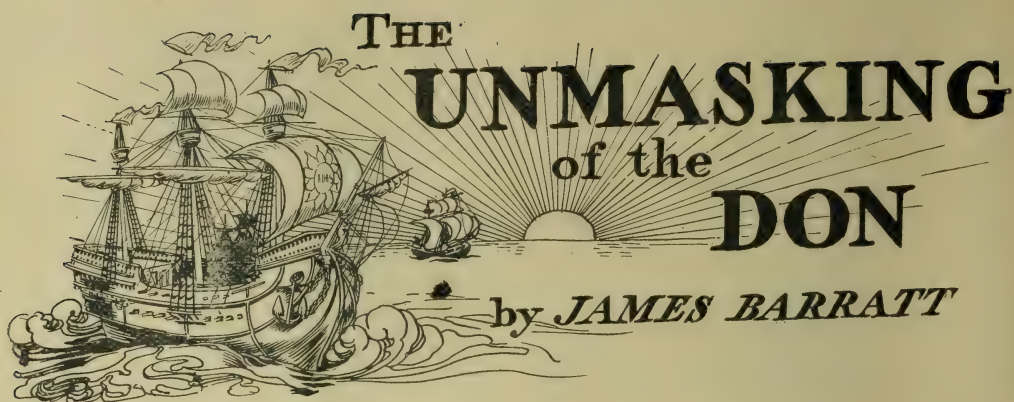
"I'm always wondering that one of those clever, handsome American women didn't steal your heart—if you've got one," said Gwen.

He slowly withdrew his gaze from the peacocks and fixed it upon her with his monocled expression that might mean everything or nothing. She chose to read everything into it and flushed with pleasure. And her left hand, moving nervously among the silver and porcelain, revealed on its third finger a narrow gold band.

He drew a long, slow breath of lazy content and drawled:—

"You're so dashed comfortable, Gwen!"

THE END.



**D**OUBTLESS she was beautiful ; and in the fulness of my youthful ardour I thought there had never before existed one so rich in all the adornments of nature. For my Lady Bess was young, with the soft bloom of the earliest rose upon her cheeks, a mass of rich brown hair, and a pair of eyes which by their laughing brightness alone attracted the gaze of all others.

Too often had my eyes met hers—too often for my peace of mind. The world vanished when she came near me, and when she was not near then was the world empty.

The air was heavy with a buzz of voices as the crowd of villagers and people from afar and near gathered round the bowling green. But conspicuous above all others was my Lady, rich in frills and glistening jewels, and seated on a raised chair half surrounded by her little bevy of dames and courtiers. For this was her birthday, and to the successful player she was to give the prize.

I was to be one of the eight combatants, and we were to play in four couples, the four successful competitors afterwards in two couples, and then the final two were to play three games and the honour to fall to the better.

I scarcely hoped to be the victor, for, though I was generally accredited a

good player, I was far handier at fence than on the green. But, much as I desired to win and have the ribbon pinned on my breast by my Lady's hand, I dreaded far more that the honour might fall to the lot of Don Alonzo, a gentleman from Spain for whom I felt the intensest dislike.

My Lord Edgcombe had brought him down from London to Devonshire, and for several weeks he had been staying at Paxley Hall, cultivating the acquaintance of Lady Bess, apparently to my Lord's great pleasure.

I had soon seen in him a powerful rival, suave and polished in speech and manner, and possibly wealthy and high born. I wondered now if he could play bowls. He was talking and smiling at Lady Bess as I approached.

"Ah! Sir Harry," he said, "we do not play together, I think?"

"Not at first," I replied, not too cheerfully.

"But later, perhaps?"

"I hope I may have the honour, Don Alonzo."

"Sir Harry takes life seriously," he smiled to my Lady.

She smiled back as she said: "He has not lived in sunny Spain, Don Alonzo."

He bowed gracefully before her.

"But he has lived in an equally brilliant light," he answered.



I wondered what other compliments he would pay her, when a general movement denoted the time for the commencement of the contest, and we moved forward to our places.

As I suggested before, I have a pretty knack at bowling, and easily defeated my first opponent. Don Alonzo was also a victor. My second contest was more difficult, but again I emerged successfully. I watched the Don, and to my perturbation noticed his evident skill. He was again the victor, and we were now left to fight for my Lady's ribbon of success.

"You see you have your desire, Sir Harry," he said suavely.

I hated his manner and him too.

"For three games," I answered bluntly.

"Unless you win the first two."

He turned round and smiled at Lady Bess.

I would have smiled too, but I could not. My ancestors were good strong fighting men, not prancing, mimicking apes.

I think it must have been recognised by the onlookers that the result of the game was of more than the usual significance. To all I was as well known as Lady Bess, for I had been bred and born near by. The Don was a stranger and foreigner, in whom little interest was felt. The honour of the county rested in my hands.

I bowled my two balls and the Don

followed. There was a moment of silence, and then a cheer arose as I was announced the winner of the first game. We now reversed the order. It was a close contest, but I lost. Where had he practised to play



"I LOOKED DOWN AT HER AND SAW WHAT I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN."

like this? Game and game. I looked hard at him.

"It will be three after all," he said.

Once more I bowled, once more he followed. We walked towards the balls, where much measuring seemed to be going on. And then the word came—"A tie—both are equal."

We must throw again.

An appearance of vexation passed quickly across his features, but as we walked back he had a light-hearted look and word for Lady Bess. I was dumb; for it was plain that we were rivals in the same suit. He did not speak to me this time.

Slowly he sent his two balls up. Not a sound could be heard, save the trilling of a skylark in the blue above. I could feel my heart beating in the pent-up excitement. And then I threw. We both stood still, waiting the result. After what seemed an age, it came.

"Don Alonzo wins!"

A half-hearted cheer went up. My heart fell. He approached me in his usual buoyant style.

"Sir Harry, it has been a hard fight," he said.

"You are the victor," I acknowledged.

Lady Bess greeted him with a smile, and pinned the ribbon on his breast. Did she care for him? The thought made me mad, and as soon as opportunity arose I walked away from the merry group.

But I could find no rest. Now that there seemed a possibility of losing my Lady, she appeared to be more necessary than ever for my life.

Lord Edgcombe, I used to think, had encouraged my hopes. But nothing definite had ever been said, and under the fresh conditions might not even he have changed? I determined to see him as soon as possible.

By good fortune I found him disengaged a few hours afterwards, in his study. He received me in his usual open manner, and spoke in a complimentary way of my effort at bowls in

the afternoon. But I soon changed the conversation.

"I wanted to speak to you of another matter, my Lord," I said.

"Well, Harry, and what is that?"

"You have known me since I was a boy," I started. "Our house is one of the oldest in the county. The Lorrimers have gained renown both at home and abroad."

"Who should know that better than I?" he interrupted.

"We are now somewhat impoverished in estate," I continued, "but our blood is as good as ever."

I hesitated for a moment.

"My Lord," I said, "I love your daughter. I have loved her for a long time past. Lady Bess and I have known each other for so long, and I have hoped that at one time I should gain your permission to press my suit with my Lady. Will you give me that permission now?"

I listened hopefully for his answer, but he turned his face away from me as he said:—

"Harry, I'm afraid I cannot."

My heart fell at the blow.

"Do you mean," I said, "that I am to have no chance of winning Lady Bess for my wife?"

"I mean," he replied quickly, "that I have other views for her."

I could guess only too well what his views were. The thought made my blood boil.

"And so, my Lord," I said somewhat sharply, "Don Alonzo has gained your favour."

"I have my own views with regard to Lady Bess," he reiterated.

"And you will doubtless compel her to marry him."

"Sir Harry, you forget yourself!"

"Maybe," I replied angrily, "but I do not forget something else. I do not forget that the woman I love is to be forced into marriage with a coxcomb of a foreigner. I do not forget—!"

"Leave the house!" thundered my Lord. "Am I to be contradicted in my



own place by a youth scarce full grown? Leave the house!"

"I go, my Lord," I replied, "and you shall have no future need to complain of my presence at Paxley Hall."

And were all my hopes to end thus? My fingers itched to use my sword; Don or no Don, the Spaniard should feel its point. Was he not a mere interloper, whilst I had loved my Lady for years? But had her heart been won by his suavity and compliments? I remembered the smile she gave him when she pinned the favour on his breast. It was only too likely, and, if so my suit was then quite hopeless.

I know that the birds sang sweetly, but I heeded not their note; the sun shone brightly, but I noticed not its brilliance; a soft, balmy south-west wind fluttered the leaves, but cooled not my heated brow.

I had almost passed through the Park, deep in my own miserable thoughts, when I heard a rustling beside me, and a voice said:—

"Well, Hal, where are you going so seriously?"

It was my Lady, and she was alone. "Going?" I echoed. "I don't know. Anywhere."

"What ails you, Hal?"

She had turned from gay to grave. I wondered did she really care for me.

"Bess," I said, "can you not guess what ails me?"

"You were beaten at bowls," she laughed. "Fie! to take it so to heart."

"Yes," I agreed, "I was beaten; but that is past."

"What then?"

"The Don is master of more games than one."

"May be," she said. "I have heard he is quick with the rapier."

"And in love," I added.

A slight flush came to her cheeks as she said in an off-hand manner: "Oh!"

"But I suppose you know nothing of that?" I asked in, I am afraid, almost a sneering tone.

"Hal!" she exclaimed, "what do you mean?"

"I mean that Don Alonzo is paying his court to you, that your father favours his suit, and that you, it would appear, do also."

She had turned pale, and lifted her head like a queen.

"And so that is what you think, is it? Well?"

I had almost continued in my anger and dejection, but my love for her overpowered all.

"Bess," I cried, "do you not know I love you? Have you not known that for an age past, or have you not guessed?"

She did not answer.

"I have said no word," I went on, "but you have long been the hope of my life. I have always hoped that some day I might claim you."

A sweet smile hovered round her features.

"Hal," she said, "and have you never guessed anything?"

I looked at her, and saw what I should have known.

"Do you mean——?" I started.

"Nothing," she said.

"Everything," I cried, and in a moment she was in my arms.

Did I hear the birds now? I almost think so.

"And you do not love the Don?" I asked a few minutes later.

"You should have known, Hal."

I agreed.

"But you seemed to welcome his advances," I apologised. "How you smiled when you pinned the favour on his breast!"

"I had to, Hal, I had to 'seem.' And could you not trust me?"

"I know I should have," I acknowledged.

"My father wishes me to marry Don Alonzo," she said suddenly.

"I know."

"Have you seen him then? What did he say?"

"He would not allow me to pay my suit to you."

"And now?" she asked.

"I have disobeyed him. Will he press your marriage with the Don?"

"I am afraid so," she said seriously. "But I will never agree."

I looked in her eyes, and I knew the value of her words.

"Bess, how can we defeat the Don?"

She looked round to see that no one was near and then cried softly:—

"I believe he is a spy and a traitor!"

"What!" I cried.

"Hush!" she said, "I can only guess. But I have reasons. I believe he is an agent from Spain. I have noted his conversation."

I looked at her with admiration.

"And you were doing this whilst I thought you were falling in love with him?"

"You're a man, Hal," she laughed, "without a woman's wit."

"And has your wit discovered anything else?"

"Ever so much, you clever boy. Listen. Don Alonzo, I believe, did not want to stay too long in London, so he won my father's goodwill. But he often receives confidential messages here. I surprised him once reading a letter that one of them brought. It was the only occasion on which I have confused him."

"And you think that if we could gain possession of one of these letters we might defeat him?"

"I believe so."

"Then we must."

"How?" she queried.

I thought for a moment.

"Have you any idea when he will expect the next messenger?" I asked.

"To-night. I heard him give directions a short time since."

"Then I must waylay him."

"A highwayman, Hal?" she cried.

"Think of the stake."

"Is it worth so much risk?"

"It is worth—" I started, but I said no more in words.

"Be careful, dear boy, won't you?"

I promised, and she let me go.

It took but little time to saddle Rover, and with a mask in my pocket and a pistol hidden in my belt, I galloped off in the direction of Wendebury Wood, some ten miles on the road to London. This point was peculiarly suitable for my business, as it commanded a long stretch of the open road and at the same time afforded a capital hiding place.

I had waited for the better part of an hour, and only one or two farm labourers had passed by. Twilight was creeping over, and the birds were noisy with their late evensong. I was wondering whether I had not put myself to unnecessary trouble, when of a sudden I heard the clatter of a horse's feet in the distance. As the rider approached, I could see he was not one of this part of the country. I must risk whether he was my man or not.

With my mask on and pistol in my hand, I confronted him. He pulled up somewhat sharply, so that his nag well-nigh threw him.

"I am sure you will empty your pockets without unnecessary trouble," I said affably.

He looked at my pistol and at the road.

"I am afraid you will not find me worth much," he replied.

"I must apologise for my haste," I continued, "but I wish to meet someone else before dark."

"A gentleman of your occupation must lead a busy life," he said, airily.

"Exactly. Will you do as I request?"

I spoke quickly, and he took my meaning. He emptied his outside pockets, which only contained some odds and ends and seven or eight guineas in small pieces.

"Some gentlemen keep their valuables inside," I suggested. "May I trouble you further?"

He protested that he had nothing.



but after a short time produced some papers, amongst which I saw a letter addressed to Don Alonzo.

"By my faith! A love letter," I cried.

"No," he answered quickly, "Don Alonzo has no lady-love."

"We will see," I said, with my hand upon the fastening.

"It will not interest you, and I would like to keep it intact."

"You make me curious," I smiled. "Why should I not share the Don's secret?"

I ripped the fastening open, and turned to him.

"Pray replace your possessions in your pockets," I said. "I cannot rob a gentleman of so little."

He did so whilst I hastily read the letter, keeping one eye on his movements. The letter surpassed my greatest hopes. It contained various particulars, supposed to be secret, of our naval preparations against Spain. I had the Don now. In my rejoicing I well-nigh forgot the presence of the gentleman whom I had relieved of this missive. But I was recalled to myself by the sound of a horse's hoofs in the distance.

"I am going near Paxley Hall, where Don Alonzo is staying," I said, "and I promise you he shall have the letter. I trust you will pardon me in relieving you of this little burden, but as I hear some one coming, you will kindly turn your horse and ride whence you came as hard as you can."

"And I may rely on you?" he asked.

"As a gentleman—of the road or anywhere," I bowed.

"Then, sir, I will wish you good-day," and he galloped his horse down the long straight stretch of road.

I whipped my mask off, replaced my pistol, and turned Rover towards home. What action should I take now? First, I must see Lady Bess. My heart bounded up. For what might not this mean? Mine was the strong hand now, and my rival would vanish whence he came.

I jogged along, and the approaching horseman quickly reached me. He was riding at a good pace, and almost passed me, but, recognising me, pulled up some distance ahead and turned back.

"What! Sir Harry!" he cried.

It was Don Alonzo. He looked at me closely.

"I scarcely expected to meet you here," he added.

"Nor I you." My old hatred of him sprang out, and I feared I should be discourteous to him. "I thought you would be more pleasantly engaged elsewhere," I said somewhat sarcastically.

He raised his eyebrows and smiled.

"I am afraid I scarcely understand. You mean——?" he said, with his customary suavity.

"Don Alonzo is scarcely a stranger to ladies' company," I half laughed.

"You are young, Sir Harry. You should try to be more circumspect."

His coolness and manner maddened me.

"I have been told," I continued, ignoring his last remark, "that Don Alonzo has no lady-love."

"Your informant should have been chastised for his impertinence," he replied.

"And so can receive no love letters."

He started and looked at me. I flung discretion to the wind and longed only to meet him sword to sword.

"You beat about the bush, Sir Harry. What would you with me?"

"I promised to deliver this to you," I said, handing him the letter.

He frowned as he fingered it over.

"But it has been opened," he muttered.

"I also took that upon myself," I replied as I bowed low before him.

His face turned ashy pale.

"And so," he cried, "Sir Harry Lorrimer has turned thief and pilferer!"

"His actions depend upon those with whom he has to deal," I said quietly.

It seemed strange, but as he waxed angry, I became cool.

"I have half a mind to run you through as you deserve."

"Don Alonzo has, I believe, a reputation with the sword."

"Ha! ha!" he laughed loudly, but without merriment. "If you will not be denied, there is yet enough light," and, dismounting, he drew his sword.

I was immediately prepared. He made a lunge at me, which I as quickly turned aside.

"Not yet, Don Alonzo," I said.

"'Twas but a feint," he replied; but his eyes between were full of passion and I knew he lied.

"We will play this game fairly," I added. "It is not a love affair."

"And you think you will be more successful?" he asked with a grin.

"I desire to take my chance."

We set to with a will. The rich afterglow of sunset tinged the sky and made the strip of pale moon look more pale, but promised us sufficient light to finish our little altercation.

He attacked me fiercely, and it took all my skill to keep his sword's point off my breast. Lunge followed lunge with desperate precision, till at last his vigorous onslaught began to tire him out.

Now was my turn. I attempted his tactics; but he was far from being worn out, for, quickly parrying one of my thrusts, his sword-point scratched my arm somewhat deeply.

"A hit," he called, his eyes bright with passion.

"A scratch," I agreed; but I could feel my arm tingling.

I now became more cautious, for I felt that, in spite of my ability, I had found my equal. For full five minutes we fought without advantage to either side, but at last by a sharp movement I caught him just above the wrist.

For a few moments we rested, whilst

he bound his kerchief round the wound whence the blood was oozing. And then we started with renewed vigour. In his anger he became rash, and slashed and cut with all his might. I was hard pressed, and had all I could do to keep him off, but suddenly I saw my chance, and my sword-point was well in his shoulder.

The blood spurted out, and after another desperate effort he fell back exhausted. I bound up the wound as well as I could, and, as he was too weak to ride, I carried him into the wood and fastened his nag to a tree. And then I rode off to Paxley for assistance.

As I rushed along, I wondered how my news would be received by my Lord Edgcombe. I knew what Lady Bess would say. And then I wondered what would be done with the Don.

On reaching the Hall I gave my explanation to my Lord as quickly as possible, and we soon started out with a carriage to bring back Don Alonzo.

It seemed a long drive, but at last we reached the spot where I had left him. In vain we searched around; he and his horse had gone. We could just trace his footsteps from the wood to the road.

What more is there to tell? We could not find the Don, and heard no more of him. He was evidently a Spanish agent, and had made his way back to his master. And it was only a few months afterwards that news was brought to us of the great Armada of Spain that was being prepared to conquer England.

But meanwhile a ceremony had taken place at Paxley Hall, and a happy man had walked away with Lady Bess on his arm. Doubtless you can guess who that man was.



## "WANTED—A CHAPERON"

By MARGARET WESTRUP

*Illustrated by Albert Clarke*

"**M**ADEMOISELLE, those tickets can *not* be wasted!"  
"Mais non, mon enfant. Zey will perhaps take zem back——"

"Oh, no, no! I won't give up my tickets. See, now, Mademoiselle, couldn't I put on a great, big cloak and a wig, and pass as a man?"

Mademoiselle's little hands were uplifted in horror. She never quite knew when her charge was laughing.

"You cannot go, little one. I am sorry—but terrible sorry. It is also bad to leave you for ze winter alone, but *que voulez vous?* Ze Malpazzi concerts must go, at least——"

The rest of Mademoiselle's words were lost as she nearly disappeared within the large trunk, into which she was hurriedly packing her belongings.

Mademoiselle had been Brenda's governess, and was now her companion and chaperon, for neither of which offices would she accept any payment, beyond presents that Brenda often insisted on making her. Brenda lived down in Tullidge, a quiet little place in Suffolk, with two maiden aunts, but often made excursions to town, and sometimes abroad, on which occasions it was Mademoiselle's delight to chaperon her. Both had to "save up" for months beforehand for these expeditions, and this winter Brenda had come to town to take guitar lessons from a girl she had met abroad, and to indulge in a course of concerts and theatres, under Mademoiselle's chaperonage.

They had taken tickets for the whole course of the Malpazzi concerts, and had only been to one, when Mademoiselle received a distracted letter from her

brother, imploring her to come and stay with them, as his wife was very unwell, and the lady-help had just left them, &c.

"Zat means for all ze winter," said poor little Mademoiselle, sadly.

But she bustled about, packed and talked, and at three o'clock in the afternoon left Brenda standing on the platform at London Bridge, while Mademoiselle leant from the carriage window, gesticulating, and calling out last injunctions.

Brenda caught the words: "Get rid of zem—sell zem!" and, laughing, waved her handkerchief till the train was out of sight. But as she walked out of the station, she murmured decidedly:—

"Sell them I will *not*! Some way out of the difficulty I *will* find!"

She went back to the quiet little rooms in Bloomsbury that she and Mademoiselle always occupied on their visits to town, and began to con over her few acquaintances.

"Nellie Harford—out of town from to-morrow. Mrs. Hildreth — hates Malpazzi's method or something. Old Miss Drury—never goes out in the evening. It's no good—there isn't any one."

She wrinkled her brow in thought, but she did not give in.

"I *will* go somehow. Malpazzi's going to America in the spring. I may never get such a chance again. He's simply perfect!"

Suddenly she gave a little cry; she jumped up.

"I have it! One can get anything by advertising nowadays. I'll advertise for a chaperon." She gave a gleeful little laugh. "I wonder what Mademoiselle would say? Well, I'll be very careful;

I will ask for references, as Aunt Matilda does when a new maid comes. And I won't have anyone who doesn't look respectable and stout and married."

She went to the writing-table.

"Now, where to advertise? Ah! I know—*The Church and State*. I sha'n't get anything too frivolous from there."

She made a good many attempts at the advertisement before she was satisfied, but at last she decided it would do. She had advertised for a chaperon to take her to the rest of the Malpazzi evening concerts, the chaperon to receive tickets for the stalls free in return for her chaperonage.

She took the advertisement herself to the office of *The Church and State*, and was assured it should be inserted the very next day.

The polite young man who took her order blushed very much, and looked as if he longed to offer himself for the post.

Brenda went back to her rooms, and tried to read some German essays, but she was wondering all the time how many applicants she would have, and what they would be like.

"They'll be big, stout women in heavy, beaded cloaks, and I shall be terrified of them. They'll be little, meek, silly women, and I shall feel as if I ought to chaperon *them*. They'll be common and talkative, dull and severe—— Oh, dear! I do hope I'll get someone congenial."

But Mademoiselle was an ideal chaperon—bright, clever, sympathetic, sensible. She had spoilt Brenda for anyone else.

However, the next morning Brenda waited, full of glee. She peeped round the window-curtains of the little sitting-room, and eyed the clock anxiously. Her advertisement was in *The Church and State*; she had ordered a number expressly to see. To her music-loving nature it seemed a tempting offer. She thought she would be inundated with applicants. But no one appeared for a

while, and Brenda left the window and went up to her bedroom to fetch a book. Immediately there was a loud knock on the front door.

"It must be she! Of course, she must needs come just when I leave the room for a minute, so that I can't watch her up the path. Come in!"

Elizaput a hurried head round the door.

"Come about some advertisement, Miss. Yes, mum, I'm comin'!"

"Very well," Brenda said, to Eliza's disappearing back.

"Suppose I hate her?" Brenda stood a moment dismayed. "Suppose I hate her, and she's beaded and married and respectable? How shall I get rid of her?"

A dim remembrance of a wicked aunt who, when engaging new servants, used to say she was already suited when she wasn't, if she disliked an applicant's appearance, came to Brenda's mind. She threw back her head.

"I, too, must, if need be!"

She turned to the looking-glass, and gave her hair a pat; then she swept out on to the landing, down the stairs, and into her little sitting-room.

The charm about Brenda was that all her expressions seemed to suit her so well. The expression of extreme surprise, with a hint of humour underlying it, that flashed into her face as she entered the sitting-room was particularly becoming.

The big young fellow standing by the window noticed it, and began eagerly: "I saw your advertisement in *The Church and State*——" then stopped abruptly, abashed by the coldness of her gaze.

For Brenda had decided in a flash that it was gross impertinence on his part to apply for the position of chaperon, and so her expression had changed again, and she held herself very erect.

"Yes?" she said, icily, in the pause that followed his words.

"I'm—I'm sure it will be all right," he said. "You—will you let me have it, please?"



Brenda's breath was taken away. Her eyes grew stormy. How dared he be so impertinent? Even in her anger she wondered that his looks should so belie him.

"Certainly not!" she said.

"Oh!"

There was a pause. He had grown very red. He gave an uncomfortable little laugh.

"What a ruffian I must look!" he said. "Is it that?"

"Your looks have nothing to do with it."

His insolence was incredible.

"What is it, then? I came early on purpose to make sure of it. You don't know how keen I am about it." He looked himself up and down. "You might tell me what's wrong, will you?"

Something of frank appeal about him softened her a little.

"I expected a woman," she said, coldly.

"Oh! is that it?" He smiled at her in the most friendly way.

"Yes, I daresay you did. You'd hardly expect a man, would you? I've come on my sister's behalf, you see."

Brenda's expression changed again.

"Oh, I see. I suppose she couldn't come?" she said, smiling.

"Well, she hasn't seen your advertisement, you see, and I thought it would be so awfully nice if I could manage it for her."

She looked at him amazed.

"Would she like it?" she suggested, feebly.



"SHE WENT ACROSS TO THE WRITING-TABLE  
AND PICKED UP A PAPER."

"Oh, yes! She'd be no end pleased. Don't you think so?"

"No, I don't!"

His face fell.

"You mean she'd rather come herself?"

"Anyway, I would prefer to see her," Brenda said, staidly.

He raised his eyebrows in comical dismay.

"Oh, I say! you don't trust me. It *must* be that I look disreputable!"

"I do not wish to prolong this interview," she said, coldly.

He flushed to the roots of his fair hair, and picked up his hat with an angry gesture. Then his eyes twinkled.

"I believe I could have recourse to the law," he said. "There is the advertisement, you know."

Brenda's heart felt like water. A man, she reasoned, must know more about the law than she. Was there something wrong about her advertisement? Could she be forced to accept any respectable woman as a chaperon? She smiled a little smile, conciliatory and altogether charming.

"Perhaps I might call and see your sister?" she said.

His face set frowningly; but her smile lingered about her mouth, and he, seeing it, sighed ruefully.

"You are determined not to trust me?" he said.

Brenda's heart was Irish, as well as her eyes. She began to feel sorry for this frank-faced young man.

"Well," she said; "surely it is usual to—to see——" She paused for a word.

"Oh, yes—but I'm her brother, you know, and"—joyously—"it would be such a lovely surprise for her."

Brenda's head went up a little.

"I don't see why."

He stared into her proud young eyes in amazement. Then he smiled.

"Oh! that's because you don't know her. She loves surprises, and a surprise like this! I daresay you'd never guess how beautiful——" He stopped abruptly. "I beg your pardon," he added, uncertainly.

Brenda's small face was rather pale. She was so angry that her voice was a little bit breathless.

"Go at once!" she said; "I will

not trouble your sister to chaperon me."

He leant forward to catch her words. A cart rumbling by drowned most of them.

"A chaperon?" he said, flushing. "I—I beg your pardon—I didn't know——"

He strode to the door, looking vastly uncomfortable. "My sister will come herself for the dog," he said, and went out hurriedly.

Brenda stared at the closing door. She heard the clang of the front door. Mechanically she crossed to the window and watched the broad-shouldered figure stride down the little front path. It seemed a pity that he should be mad. At the gate he turned his head and looked up at the window. The sanity of his reproachful eyes gave her a little shock. Impulsively she beckoned, and he turned and re-entered the gate. When he stood, quiet and stern-faced, before her, she felt suddenly shy.

"I—I called you back, because——"

She paused, and her cheeks grew pink.

"Yes?" he said.

"I think there must be some mistake——"

"Not at all." He was very hurt. "You won't give the dog up to me, so I will tell my sister of the advertisement, and leave the matter in her hands."

A little ripple of laughter passed across her face.

"But—but you see, there *isn't* a dog!" she said.

Her face was irresistible. He found himself smiling with her.

"Not a dog? Do you mean that you've lost it again?"

"I never had it!"

"You—never—had—it? But the advertisement——" He stared, bewildered.

"I advertised for a chaperon to take me to the Malpazzi concerts," Brenda said clearly.

There was a moment's pause, then he broke into a great shout of laughter.





"QUICK AS LIGHTNING SHE PICKED THE EAGER LITTLE MITE UP."

"Oh, I say—I beg your pardon, but——"

His laughter was contagious it its heartiness. Brenda joined in helplessly.

"You see," he explained presently, "I couldn't help it—awfully rude—but I'm after a dog—a Maltese terrier. My sister lost hers yesterday—my married sister. I can guess how the muddle's arisen. It's sure to be Molly; she's always making muddles." He laughed again. "Oh! but I say, what an awful bounder you must have thought me! I'm no end sorry. You see, Molly saw an advertisement in to-day's *Church and State*, saying someone had found a Maltese terrier, and describing Mignonne exactly. We thought it would be fun to get it and take it to my sister Grace, so I decided to see about it at once. Molly gave me the address. Evidently she gave me the wrong one."

"I have to-day's," Brenda said. "I wanted to see my advertisement." She went across to the writing-table and picked up a paper. "Yes, here is your advertisement. Why, it is in this same street!" she said; "that is how the mistake arose. No. 39."

He thanked her earnestly.

"I'll go on there now," he said.

"I hope you will be more successful this time," she said demurely.

"Oh, yes," he smiled; "and thanks again."

He lingered, looked round the room, at her, out of the window, and finally went.

He passed, on the little front path, a stout and very severe lady, who presently faced poor Brenda in the pretty little room he had just left.

Brenda felt she *could* not have her as a chaperon; she was sure she was not fond of music; she was sure she was disagreeable. But the matron was flawless. She sat and glared at Brenda, and gave the names and professions of innumerable doctors and rectors and solicitors, cousins and brothers, and

brothers-in-law. Brenda made a despairing clutch at the memory of her wicked aunt. She said, haltingly, for she was naturally truthful—"I am sorry, but—but—I'm afraid—I'm already suited."

The lady was not only offended at the wording, she was distinctly suspicious. She asked awkward questions. "I have come at a most inconveniently early hour. Do you mean to say you have had someone in answer to your advertisement before this?"

"Yes," said Brenda, and a dimple nearly betrayed her.

"She was very early," she said.

"Yes, he—she was," Brenda agreed, and grew pink.

The matron stared suspiciously at her cheeks.

"And suitable for a chaperon?"

Brenda mentally eyed the young fellow who had just left her.

"Yes," she said, and she gave a tiny little sigh; "yes, very suitable."

"Because you are very young to discriminate, and I feel it my duty to warn you. The world is full of wicked people——"

"I don't think—she—is wicked," Brenda interrupted, demurely.

"Do you feel you can absolutely trust her?"

"Yes." There was no doubt in her tone.

"But you cannot tell. I hope she is respectable?"

Brenda dimpled. "Oh, fairly, I think," she said, airily.

Whereat the matron gasped, and finally jingled away in high dudgeon.

Brenda, watching her departure from behind the curtains, saw the young fellow come striding along.

Now Brenda loved dogs, and when she saw he was dogless, she looked many sympathetic questions, and he, looking up, met her eyes, and taking off his hat, shook his head sadly. Brenda's eyebrows asked what had become of the dog. Her eyebrows were pretty and





WILFRED SHUT THE DOOR BEHIND HER, AND TURNED BACK TO BRENDA.

kind, and he was emboldened to use his to ask permission to come and explain.

She smiled, and he came up the little front path once more. He told her that Mignonne was lost again, had vanished early that morning from No. 39, it was supposed with the entry of the milk.

Brenda was full of sympathy; and then he had to go. She guessed pretty accurately the kind of things that, knowing of her advertisement, he was longing to say, and she liked him for not saying even a half of one.

But she stamped her foot on the floor when he had gone, and observed crossly that it was a stupid world.

She interviewed one other applicant, and then she fled. For this second applicant, cheerful and self-assured, observed that she did like concerts, because "You're not expected to sit silent all the while; you can always have a chat under cover of the music, can't you?"

So Brenda, having got rid of her at last, put on her hat and coat, and fled. She left word with Eliza that she was suited, and went out. She did not know what she should do: she still felt that she could not miss the concerts, yet rather than go with such an uncongenial chaperon, she felt she would sooner give them up. She was walking along in worried thought when she caught sight of a shivering little dog. She glanced at it pityingly, and became aware that the poor little muddy creature must once have been a Maltese terrier. She paused: her heart beat quickly.

The dog was with a low-looking man, who was standing talking to another man of much the same aspect. While the first man talked he kept his eye on the dog, who stood, shivering and cowed, with its tail between its legs.

Brenda felt sure it was the lost Mignonne. She knew that she ought to go up to the man, and tell him to take the dog round to the address the young fellow had mentioned to her; but her heart quailed. She stood and looked in at the stationer's window, trying to

summon up courage to accost the man. Suddenly she heard him laugh, and say, in answer to some remark of the other's: "No bloomin' reward for me! I'm going to keep quiet a bit, and then sell 'er!"

Just then the driver of a passing dray-cart hailed them.

"I s'y! 'eard the news abart Bill?"

Bill was evidently a personage of importance. Both men went forward a step to hear better. The man's eye was off the dog. Brenda breathed softly the word "Mignonne!" At the wild delight of the poor little creature, her heart overcame her fears. Quick as lightning she picked the eager little mite up, and, unbuttoning her loose coat, slipped her inside, and walked on. Brenda's slim back looked very straight and innocent, but her knees were trembling. Pretending to glance in at a draper's window, she saw over her shoulder that the men had both rushed into the stationer's. Brenda ran after an omnibus, and got in. The conductor cast a baleful glance at a bright eye peeping from the front of her coat, then he looked at her, and discreetly turned his back.

Brenda breathed a big sigh of relief. Afterwards she made her way to the house in Lancaster Gate, and found Mrs. Dumont, in a beautiful morning wrapper, weeping. Brenda's eyes twinkled across into the eyes of a young fellow, as they stood and looked on at the ecstatic greeting between mistress and dog.

Mrs. Dumont was young, and pretty, and impulsive. After caressing Mignonne, she caressed Brenda, vowed she would be her debtor for life, insisted on her removing her outdoor wraps, and said many pretty things. Finally she exclaimed:—

"Madden! Your name is Madden? Are you any relation to that dear Francis Madden, the writer?"

"He was my father," Brenda said.

"I knew him when I was a little girl! Oh, you dear child! To think you are his daughter! And you want some-



one to chaperon you at the Malpazzi concerts? Won't you come with us? We adore Malpazzi—we wouldn't miss *one*! You *will* come, *won't* you?"

"I should like to very much——"

"Oh, that's so nice, then. My dear, you might have got a chaperon with no soul for music. - And now I must wash my poor little darling. Does she feel all horrid and dirty, then?" She went towards the door. "Would you like to see her bathed?" she asked, graciously.

"Very much," Brenda said, gravely.

The young fellow interposed.

"Grace, you haven't introduced me to Miss Madden."

"Oh, no! I was thinking you were quite old friends. My brother, Wilfred Tennington—Miss Madden. Will you excuse me just *one* moment? I must see to it myself—I *always* do—so much better." Murmuring, "I will be back in a minute," she left the room with Mignonne in her arms.

Wilfred shut the door behind her, and turned back to Brenda. Brenda sat in a nest of soft-lined cushions, that threw the delicate outline of her face and head into charming relief.

"My sister has paid you the highest compliment she knows of," he said, solemnly. "Only once have I been allowed to be present at Mignonne's bathing, and Molly only twice."

"I am honoured indeed," Brenda said.

She was thinking how fond he must be of his sister Molly, for his tone had been caressing as he mentioned her

name. He added suddenly, with boyish warmth:—

"Oh! bless Molly! What a dear girl she is!"

"You seem very fond of her," Brenda said, staidly.

"Oh, I am!"

Somehow Brenda felt sure that she too would be fond of Molly.

He said very earnestly: "You *have* been good, Miss Madden! You don't know how my sister adores that dog!"

Brenda added, sedately: "I'd never guess how beautiful she thinks it is."

He flung back his head with a roar of laughter.

"I've told falsehoods and I've stolen this morning," said Brenda, sadly.

"Falsehoods?" he queried.

She nodded, and told him of the beaded matrons.

"But," he suggested, "was it quite a fib after all? You see, you *were* suited, weren't you? I mean, you are coming with me—and I had been to you——"

"Your sister is going to chaperon me, Mr. Tennington," Brenda interrupted, decorously.

He sighed. "Mayn't I help?" he asked, pleadingly. "If my sister's your chaperon one side, mayn't I be the chaperon of the other?"

Brenda glanced at him. He had nice eyes, she thought. Coming towards the door were cooings—"She shall have a nice bath then, poor little petsie—so she shall, and all the nasty mud will go away."

Brenda said, softly: "Perhaps you may chaperon one side."



"I NOTICED THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE IN THE ROOM TALKING."

## MR. TWINBERROW'S APPEAL

By KEMLO WATSON

*Illustrated by Leonard M. Noble*

"MY DEAREST ALBERT,—  
Something *dreadful* has happened. I do wish you were here, but as I cannot *possibly* see you till Friday at rehearsal, I must write. First of all, I want you to believe that *nothing* can *ever* change my feelings. But, of course, you cannot understand why I should say all this. Well, this is what has happened. You know that rich old Mr. Strudwick who comes to see papa—the old *wretch*! (Mr. Strudwick, I mean of course, not poor, dear papa.) At least you don't really know him (Mr. Strudwick, I mean), but I recollect pointing him out to you in Oxford Street one day last summer. He and papa are not very great friends, but they are both Egyptologists, and they talk to each other about papyri and things.

"Well, this afternoon I sat down in the bay window of the library to study my part, and somehow or other I dropped off to sleep. It must have been about an hour before I awoke, and the first thing I noticed was that there were people in the room *talking*. I recognised papa's voice and *Mr. Strudwick's*. They must have come in without noticing me. I was behind the curtain, you know.

"Well, of course I was just going to rise and show myself, when I heard something that made me sit as still as a mouse *and listen*. I heard Mr. Strudwick say, 'It's no use, Melhuish, I must have her!' He said it just like a villain in a play. 'I think you're very hard, Strudwick,' said papa, 'to want to deprive me of my greatest treasure.' 'I don't see it,' said the old wretch. 'You owe me eight hundred pounds. Can you pay? Not now, you say; but I demand it now. Nevertheless I offer to forgive you the debt and pay you fifteen

hundred into the bargain as a make-weight, in exchange for what you can very well do without. If you don't accept, I shall be sorry, but I warn you I shall sue you at once. I'll sell you up.' Papa didn't answer for a bit, and then Mr. Strudwick spoke again. 'I *will* have her!' he shouted. 'Do you accept my terms?' I could hear poor papa sigh. 'Perhaps,' he said; 'but give me time to reflect.' 'I'll give you a week,' said Mr. Strudwick, 'not a day more.' 'Very well,' said papa. 'But I say again I think it most unfriendly of you to press me this way—to rob me of the apple of my eye, the joy of my life!' That was nice of papa, but a wee bit selfish, don't you think? Not a word about *my* feelings! He never thought of asking if I should like to marry a horrid old man, even if he *is* rich. But then poor papa never did understand me. No one does *really*—except you, dear. Then they went out, and I escaped to write this.

"Oh! Albert, it's like a bit out of a play, isn't it? But it's dreadful too! To be sold—for that is what it is—*and for so little*! Of course I could refuse, but I suppose I shall have to do my duty to poor papa. Unless you can find some way of defeating the horrid old thing's plot! Oh! you will, surely you will. You're so clever. Write to me, dearest, *at once*.

"Ever your own,

"ROSETTA."

Can anyone marvel if Mr. Twinberrow, with this letter before him, found that his appetite for breakfast had dwindled? It was with a trembling hand that he held his tea-cup while he drained its tepid contents. He contrived to eat a morsel of toast, but that was all. The fragrant bloater failed to tempt that morning, and he left unbroken the egg,



with its time-worn inscription—"new-laid."

He read the letter again with curiously mixed emotions. He was conscious that beneath his distress there was an undercurrent of satisfaction. It seemed that Romance was not to pass him by for ever. Of course, he was familiar with her on the stage—being an amateur, he called it "the boards"—but now at last he had "met her off." The goddess had, with her touch, glorified, if she saddened his real life, which had hitherto jarred on his dramatic taste as somewhat bare of incident and situation. Here was a situation with a vengeance! True, it was old as melodrama itself, but not the less poignant on that account. The pathos of it almost overpowered him, for Mr. Twinberrow was as sentimental as a coroner's juryman.

Good heavens! if he should lose her! If he did, he would never be able to replace her—never! Where could he find another so pretty, so accomplished, so—so lady-like? "Yes," he murmured, "that's what get's me. She's so lady-like. And cultured! By Jove! How she set down that bounder Thornbury, when he said Hall Caine wrote 'The Mighty Atom!'" And musical! Hear her play *Ora Pro Nobis* on the mandoline! Ye gods!

Her father, too, though a bit of a Philistine in some ways, was considered a distinguished man, he believed. Of course, it was a rotten, silly game to work so hard at. What was it? Higher Attic Script and scarabæi and things, that had no money in them. But he supposed that, in their way, these, too, were Art. And it wouldn't be half bad to talk of "my father-in-law—Melhuish, the great Egyptologist, you know." Why, old Biggleswade, his "governor," had only married the daughter of a dean. That wasn't so very much better, though, of course, it was definite, and official, and all that. Yes, Rosetta Melhuish was a girl any man might be proud to be seen with anywhere. She wouldn't

be out of place in the dress circle of the St. James's Theatre.

Surely Fate would not be so cruel as to tear her from him! He could not think it. True love like theirs must expect obstacles, but he knew it nearly always triumphed in the end. At any rate, this plot of the elderly lover, with a financial pull on the yielding parent, invariably came out right. In all the years he had been a subscriber to Mudie's and a member of the Henry Arthur Jones Dramatic Club, he could not recall an instance to the contrary. He knew these old men. There were only two kinds. Either they were fiends incarnate, in which case they over-reached themselves; or else their thin crusts of misanthropy concealed floods of melting tenderness, ever ready to burst forth in opportune eruptions of beneficence. The question was, to which type did this Strudwick belong? He had only caught a glimpse of his rival, but he distinctly remembered that the face seemed kindly. Yes, it was the face of the rich and benevolent uncle. A man like that had only to realise the crime he was committing in standing between two faithful lovers. "By Jove!" said Mr. Twinberrow, "I'll call on him and tell him the whole story. I'm sure I can make him see things right!"

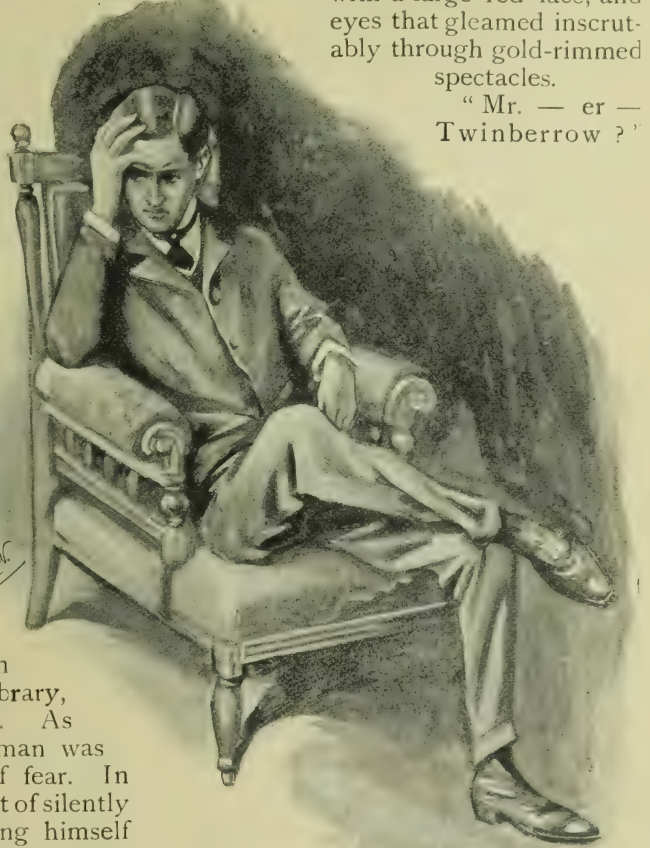
He rose and looked into the gilt-bordered mirror over the fireplace, posing himself carefully between the black marble clock and one of the pink vases hung with prisms. Candour compelled him to admit that it was an interesting face he saw. Not too strongly marked, you know, else had it been less appealing. How nicely that waving lock fell over the smooth forehead! How young he looked, though he was nearly twenty-eight! That baby-collar suited him, and enhanced the youthful effect. He should wear one when he called on old Strudwick. Yes, that face must enlist his sympathy.

Mr. Twinberrow was saved from the fate of Narcissus by the black marble

clock striking nine. He must hurry to the office. Having put on his hat and coat, and ascertained that he was provided with coppers for the bus and the *Daily Mail*, he placed a cigarette between his lips. In the hall, with a lighted match in his hand, he paused. Of course, he thought, he might pay the eight hundred himself, if he sold the shares his Aunt Louisa left him, and raised a bit on his insurance policy. But Mr. Twinberrow, though an artist in his hours of ease, was, after all, a man of business, and he determined that so desperate an expedient could not be entertained, except in the last resort. He lighted his cigarette and opened the door.

his hair, and was practising the trick with his eyebrows, when a footstep outside the door made him turn sharply, in time to see Mr. Theophilus Strudwick enter with a leisurely air. The eminent Egyptologist was a tall, portly man, with a large red face, and eyes that gleamed inscrutably through gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Mr. — er — Twinberrow?"



"GOOD HEAVENS! IF HE SHOULD LOSE HER!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The grim old butler, who evidently suspected him of book-canvassing, or worse, had reluctantly shown Mr. Twinberrow into the library, and departed with his card. As the door closed, the young man was conscious of a little chill of fear. In his trepidation, he half thought of silently slipping downstairs and letting himself out; but the reflection that he would leave his card behind, with "The Pittites' Club" in the corner, restrained him. A clubman couldn't do a thing like that. He was horribly nervous, though, and felt that his carefully prepared speeches were fast oozing from his memory. — And he began to doubt if his get-up were all right. Then, disregarding the ancient funerary urns, statuettes, and trinkets, in which the room abounded, he made his way to a little hanging mirror, whence he drew encouragement. He had deftly arranged

said he, after a glance at the card in his hand. His visitor bowed and mumbled assent.

"Won't you sit down? I don't think I know you, do I, Mr. Twinberrow?"

"We have not been introduced," answered that young man pleasantly; "but we have mutual friends."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Strudwick, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes. I believe you are intimate with some great friends of mine—the Melhuishes, of Pembridge Villas?"

"I do know Mr. Melhuish," admitted the other. "Have you come on his behalf?" he continued, after a pause.

Mr. Twinberrow hesitated.

"N—not exactly," he stammered. "That is to say, he doesn't know I am here; but—but I wanted to talk about your relations with him."

"Indeed! May I ask why I should discuss these relations with you?"

The young man was visibly disconcerted; but he rallied at once, and, on a sudden inspiration, plunged.

"Because," he cried, in his best stage voice—the one with tears in it—"because my happiness is at stake. Oh! Mr. Strudwick, you see before you a suppliant!"

"Bless me!" said Mr. Strudwick.

"Oh! sir! I am sure that, if you will allow me to speak, I can show you that what you seek would not be for your own happiness. And it would wreck two lives—two young, innocent lives. Surely you would not do that!"

The old man stared. "Mr.—er—Twinberrow," he said, "you puzzle, even more than you interest me. If you really have anything to say, will you be good enough to say it as briefly and explicitly as possible."

This was hardly encouraging. Mr. Strudwick was, it seemed, less fusible than his visitor had supposed. There was, however, nothing for it but to make a plain statement of the case; and this, after a moment's hesitation, Mr. Twinberrow proceeded to do.

"Very well, sir," he said. "I am advised that Mr. Melhuish owes you eight hundred pounds, and that on Tuesday afternoon you insisted on an immediate payment. That is so, is it not?"

"Assume that it is. What follows?"

"I am advised that Mr. Melhuish was unable to pay, and that you then made a proposition to him, offering to forgive him the debt and pay him a large sum

besides in exchange for—for—I don't care to name it, but shall we say—a certain consideration?"

"I don't see why you shouldn't name it," observed Mr. Strudwick; "but say a consideration, if you like."

"I merely hesitated to introduce a lady's name," said Mr. Twinberrow, with dignity.

The Egyptologist smiled. "Your delicacy seems almost overstrained," he remarked; "but I repeat, call her what you like."

"I should never speak of her except in the most respectful terms," said the young man coldly.

"Very becoming! Well?"

"Well, Mr. Strudwick, I want to say that, while your offer shows how deeply you are attached to—to the lady—that I am confident that when you know all the circumstances, your goodness of heart—for you have a kind heart, Mr. Strudwick—your face tells me that——"

"Stop a bit!" interposed the other. "This unsolicited testimonial is perhaps well meant, but I'd rather you didn't discuss my physiognomy. And I warn you I don't in the least set up to be benevolent. Pray disabuse yourself of that notion. Now, sir, come to the point."

Mr. Twinberrow was chilled: this was not at all the sort of interview he had contemplated. But he pulled himself together for a final effort.

"I was only going to say that I hoped that—that you would not insist on your terms when you knew——"

"Why not?" broke in the old man. "Are you prepared to pay the debt? No? Then what the deuce do you mean by coming here and interfering with my business? What have you to do with it? For that matter, how do you know anything about it? Did Melhuish tell you?"

"No," said Mr. Twinberrow, sadly. "I have it from the lady in question herself."

The effect of this simple statement on the Egyptologist was astonishing. He pushed his chair back, and stared at the young man for a good half-minute, with





"I OWE YOU A DEBT OF GRATITUDE, AND ALSO AN APOLOGY.

the air of one inspecting a curious and possibly dangerous animal. Then he began to laugh silently till he had to take off and wipe his spectacles. Replacing them, he subjected Mr. Twinberrow to another scrutiny. At last he broke the silence.

"This is delightful!" he cried. "How did she know?"

"She was in the room when you discussed the matter with Mr. Melhuish."

"Of course she was!" chuckled the old man. "How stupid of me! And she told you about it?"

"She sent me a letter."

"A letter! Ho! Ho! And how was it delivered? By a slave, or by some occult means?"

"It came by post, of course," said the young man sulkily.

"Charming! Would you mind showing it to me?"

"Sir!" said Mr. Twinberrow, "that letter is sacred."

"Great Scot! I should think so!" shouted the Egyptologist. "But I shouldn't be irreverent. I'll tell you what: if you show me that letter and prove that it was written by the lady in question, as you call it, I'll reconsider my bargain with Melhuish."

Mr. Twinberrow beamed. "Sir!" he cried. "You did yourself an injustice: you have a kind heart. Under the circumstances, I think I may let you read the letter." He took an elongated dark grey envelope from his pocket and handed it to his host.

That gentleman looked at the outside. "Dear me!" he murmured. "English-

and a modern hand!" Then he took out the enclosure. As he read, his face assumed a puzzled look; then he smiled: the smile became a grin; and finally, he burst into a roar of laughter. He lay back and laughed till he was purple in the face, while Mr. Twinberrow sat, choking with indignation.

"Dear, dear!" said Mr. Strudwick, when he had recovered his breath, "I haven't had a laugh like that for years. I owe you a debt of gratitude, and also an apology—and also an apology. Do you know that, for several minutes, I took you for a most amusing lunatic?"

"Sir!"

"But you will see that my mistake was natural, indeed inevitable, when I explain that I understood you to say you had received a letter from Queen Hatshepsu, who died about thirty-five centuries ago."

"I—I don't understand," stammered Mr. Twinberrow.

"Yes. The fact is that Miss Rosetta Melhuish completely misunderstood the conversation she overheard. She is doubtless a most pleasing young person; but I fancy she is, like most of her sex, inclined to overrate her attractiveness. No, Mr. Twinberrow, I hung up my lyre and torches long ago. I assure you I have no thought of being your rival. The lady for whose possession I was bargaining with Melhuish was the one who stands in a wooden case in the corner of the library."

"What! The mummy?"

"Exactly."

Mr. Twinberrow gasped. Heavens! Was this his romance? What a trick fortune had played him! Why, it was a booby-trap! He could have fancied that all the statuettes in the room were laughing at him, like that detestable old man just now. He was too humiliated to derive any solace from the discovery that Rosetta was in no danger, almost too confused to grasp the rest of Mr. Strudwick's explanation.

"Yes," the old man was saying; "the

mummy of an eighteenth dynasty Queen—a very different person from Miss Rosetta, you perceive. Though, by the way, it is recorded that Queen Hatshepsu wore male attire in her latter years. I shouldn't wonder if— Ah! well, I won't prophesy. But you don't seem pleased at my news. Perhaps with regard to Melhuish, you think my methods oppressive, but it's all part of the game. Collecting's like poker, you know: anything is fair, short of downright theft. Melhuish would do the same if he were in my place. I'm afraid I can't let him off his bargain."

"Certainly not!" said the young man, who had collected his shattered wits and was prepared to make an orderly retreat. "Certainly not, Mr. Strudwick. If you'll allow me to say so, I consider that you are treating him most handsomely. And he can get a grandfather's clock, or a corner cupboard in place of the mummy. It'll look every bit as well."

"You must suggest that to him," said Mr. Strudwick, with a smile.

"I will," said Mr. Twinberrow, rising. "And now, sir, I can't tell you how you have relieved my mind. I am deeply grateful, and I can only apologise for occupying so much of your valuable time."

"Not at all!" said the other, as he rang the bell. "The debt is mine. You have given me a great deal of innocent pleasure, Mr.—er—Twinberrow. Good morning! Give Miss Rosetta the horrid old thing's kind regards."

As the door closed, the Egyptologist laughed again. "The vain little baggage!" he chuckled.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Twinberrow walked gloomily down Mount Street. "Well," he said to himself with a sigh; "Rosetta will be pleased at any rate. And she'll get the fifteen hundred some day, I suppose."

But when he told his story to Miss Melhuish—and she got it all out of him—that lady was less enthusiastic than he had anticipated. In fact the whole episode was disappointing.

## VERONICA'S CAPTIVE

By E. R. PUNSHON

*Illustrated by Mary Horsfall*

**P**RIDE made a brave stand, but at last it gave way, and Veronica slipped from the drawing-room to the head of the stairs.

"Andrews," she called softly, and then more loudly: "Andrews," and then with a distinct tremor of anxiety: "Oh, Andrews, are you there?"

"Eh, Miss, is that you?" came a sleepy voice. "Lor! I believe I should have been asleep in another moment."

Veronica gave a little gasp at this. That anyone should sleep under such conditions—they two alone in the house and a storm howling outside—appeared to her very marvellous.

"I'm not frightened either, Andrews," she remarked presently.

"Bless your heart, Miss, that's right!" said Andrews, approvingly. "I think I'll go to bed, Miss."

"Oh, will you?" said Veronica in a dismayed tone. "Er—er—Andrews."  
"Yes, Miss."

"If you are at all nervous, Andrews, you can come and sit with me in the drawing-room."

"Lor, Miss, if you like," said Andrews, cheerfully, and Veronica, hearing her heavy step on the stair, slipped away back to the drawing-room and began reading the paper with a fine appearance of unconcern, though it is true that she did not as a rule show so much interest in the market reports. In a moment or two the smiling Andrews appeared in the doorway.

"It was just sich a night as this," she remarked cheerfully, as a particularly wild gust of wind drove the rain rattling against the window panes, "as I remember my Aunt Jessica Elizabeth

telling how two poor lone women—as it might be you and me, Miss—had their throats cut by——"

"Oh! Andrews," screamed Veronica. "Don't!"

"It is quite true, Miss," said Andrews in an injured tone; "my Aunt Jessica Elizabeth saw the blood——"

"Andrews," said Veronica, desperately, as she tried in vain to keep her teeth from chattering, "how is your rheumatism?"

"Which it is bad enough," said Andrews, gloomily, if a little surprised at the change of subject, quite willing to give all the details Miss Veronica would listen to; "and that there shooting pain in my left arm." And Andrews went on in full flood till all of a sudden she was stricken into palsied fear, as in a momentary lull in the gusty wind they heard quite distinctly a heavy footstep on the gravel path just below the window.

Veronica sat trembling but upright, while Andrews slid to the floor and endeavoured to crawl beneath the sofa. Then Veronica hastily extinguished the lamp as they heard the footsteps pause for a moment and then go on again.

"Oh, Miss, Miss," said Andrews, weeping, "what did you do that for? If we are to be killed and murdered, let it be in the light, Miss."

"Father told me once," explained Veronica, surprised to find that now her teeth no longer chattered, "that was the best thing to do, because then the burglar can't see you, and you can see him if he has a lantern."

But this was too subtle a precaution for Andrews, who, abandoning in despair



the project of concealing her substantial person beneath the sofa, was now hopefully examining the chimney. But as a closer view proved that certainly too small, she crept behind the piano, and audibly bargained with Heaven on the basis of living an absolutely perfect life for the future in consideration of not being murdered that night.

"Andrews," said Veronica, "don't be silly."

"Hide in the china closet, Miss," said Andrews, "and dripping I will never touch again—perhaps they won't look there—which it was me, Miss, as I freely confess, what broke that there best teapot, black and blue though I swore it was the cat. Oh-h-h! I can hear them at the back door." And Andrews collapsed in a heap, too terrified even now to weep.

Gathering up her skirts and slipping off her shoes, Veronica crept silently down the passage to the head of the short flight of stairs that led to the kitchen. Andrews had left the lamp burning, and by its dim light Veronica with horror and choking fear saw a man crawling in through the window. She held her breath in deadly terror while the intruder wriggled his way on to a table, and thence to the ground. She wondered whether he would go away quietly if she offered him everything of value in the house, but she had a conviction that if she opened her mouth to speak she would begin to scream and not be able to stop. Meanwhile the intruder turned up the lamp, so that she had a good look at him.

She was surprised, and a little relieved, to perceive that he was both young and good-looking, with crisp, curly hair, frank grey eyes, and an open, pleasant countenance. He looked, however, pale and tired, and his rough cycling costume was plentifully bespattered with mud, while the drenching rain had soaked him through and through, till now the water ran from him in streams, making a puddle in the centre of the floor.

"He looks very desperate," said Veronica, with a shudder; "but I hardly think he will murder us," she added, more hopefully, "for he does not look wholly bad."

"Now, the first thing," observed the stranger, aloud, "is to get something to eat. By Jove! won't they stare in the morning!"

He laughed—rather a pleasant laugh he had, Veronica thought—and then she observed with some surprise that he walked straight to the pantry. He opened its door and went in, and with a sudden leap of the heart, Veronica saw that he was fairly inside, and that the key was in the lock on the outside.

"Dare I?" she thought. "Oh! I daren't—I daren't—I know I daren't!"

But, none the less, she darted swiftly across the kitchen, going silently in her stockinged-feet. Just as she reached the pantry the stranger, hearing the slight noise she made, turned sharply and faced her, with open eyes and dropped jaw, in his amazement letting fall the half of a cold chicken he had just picked up. Thus for one wild, palpitating moment they faced each other. Then with desperate fingers Veronica clutched the door handle, endured a lifetime's agony as the key seemed to evade her grasp, saw herself pleading for mercy with a glittering knife held to her throat, then breathed again as she banged the door, turned the key, and, tearing it out, flung it far away.

"Oh! Andrews," she screamed, as she fell sobbing on the nearest chair, "I've got him—I've got him!"

From within the pantry came a low whistle of dismay. Then silence, broke only by Veronica's sobbing.

"Andrews!" called Veronica again, as she endeavoured to check her sobs; "Andrews, it's all right now."

"Has he gone, Miss?" inquired a very shaken and cautious voice from above.

"I've locked him up in the pantry. Come down, and bring father's big—loaded—gun with you," called Veronica,

pronouncing the last few words very loudly and distinctly, and at the same time making desperate faces at Andrews for fear she should proclaim that there was no such thing in the house.

"Excuse me," said a meek voice through the keyhole of the pantry door. "May I explain?"

"Certainly not!" said Veronica. "Not on any account."

"But if you will just listen for one moment," pleaded the meek voice.

But Veronica was firm. She picked up a broom and pushed the end of the handle against the door.

"If you just say a word," she announced, "I'll fire this big gun through the keyhole."

"You are a formidable young person," said the voice, with a sigh. "I surrender; my hands are up."

"Very likely, now you're caught," said Veronica, wisely. "But you'll stay where you are till the police come."

"You're jolly rough on a fellow," said the voice, and Veronica almost thought she heard a sound remotely like a chuckle. "May I have something to eat?"

Veronica considered this question, and the chuckle that had accompanied it, rather impertinent. She made no reply, and presently sounds that reached her showed the prisoner was making good use of his opportunities. She saw, too, that he had got a candle lighted. Presently he tapped at the door again.

"Are you there?" he inquired.

"Certainly," said Veronica, in the deepest voice she could summon. "I am here with my gun across my knee." And she again pushed the broom-handle against the door.

"Is not Mr. Copping living here now?" inquired the prisoner.

"It's no business of yours," said

Veronica, with severity, "who is living here. I am expecting the police every moment now."

"May I not try to explain?"

"Don't you listen to him, Miss," said Andrews. "He'll talk us over and bamboozle us into letting him out, and then he'll cut both our throats."



"HE RAN SWIFTLY UP THE STAIRS WITH VERONICA HARD AT HIS HEELS."

"He stays there," said Veronica, firmly, "till the police come to take him away."

But in spite of the firmness with which she spoke, she began to entertain a feeling of some compunction as she saw a little trickle of water issuing from beneath the door, and remembered how extremely wet his clothes had been.

"He'll catch his death of cold," she said to Andrews, "locked up in that cold pantry all night in his wet things."

"A good job too," said Andrews, with an audible sniff.

"He had rather a nice face," observed Veronica. "I daresay he wouldn't really have hurt us."

Andrews sniffed again. She was not in the least inclined to share in her young mistress's compassionate feelings.

"Are you very wet?" inquired Veronica, tapping on the pantry door.

"It's not what I call exactly a dry night," observed the prisoner.

"Well, I am going to give you a change of things," announced Veronica. "We will put them through the little square window in the wall."

"I say, that's awfully good of you!" said the captive prisoner.

"Only mind," said Veronica, in her deep voice, "I have still got my loaded gun."

"Don't let it go off by accident," urged the prisoner, and Veronica was much disturbed at something in his voice which seemed to suggest the mention of the gun had not properly impressed him.

Grumbling, Andrews departed to obtain the necessary apparel from the room of Veronica's father, but had scarcely gone when she was back again, trembling in every limb, her face ashen.

"Dear Lord, have mercy on our souls," she said, looking wildly round, "there's two more of 'em in the dining room."

"What do you mean?" stammered Veronica, an awful fear assailing her.

"There's two more burglars in the dining-room," groaned Andrews, "for

the lamp is lit, and I hear 'em talking and plannin' how to murder us. Oh-h-h! Our throat's as good as cut already," and with this reflection the unhappy Andrews subsided into a huddled heap in a corner, emitting muffled groans at irregular intervals.

Veronica crept to the foot of the stairs, and heard indeed a low murmur of voices and saw a gleam of light from the dining-room. She stood still, paralysed with fear at this accumulation of horrors. Her heart almost stopped beating, and her tongue literally clung to the roof of her mouth, till a persistent knocking at the pantry door forced itself on her attention.

"Excuse me," said the captive's voice, "is anything wrong?"

"Oh, I had forgotten you," said Veronica, despairingly; "it's only some more burglars."

"What?" said the prisoner in a new voice.

"Two more burglars," said Veronica, with a hard, dry sob. "Oh, what will become of us?"

"Under those circumstances," said the captive, with a low whistle, "I think I had better come out, if you don't mind," and, putting his shoulder to the door, he burst it open with a vigorous push.

Veronica gave a little cry, but after all things could not be any worse than they were already. And now she came to look at him again, this burglar really had a very nice face. Moreover, his grey eyes were shining in an oddly comforting way.

"Could you always have done that?" she asked, looking in rather an awed way at the broken door.

"Well, it's not very strong," he remarked, apologetically, "only I didn't want to frighten you. Where are those burglars?"

"In the dining-room," she answered.

"Then may I trouble you for the poker?" he asked, and, taking it, he ran swiftly up the stairs with Veronica hard at his heels.





MARY  
HORSFALL

"CAPTAIN FORESTIER, IS THAT YOU?"

They burst together into the dining-room, where two mild-faced, elderly people were having some wine and biscuits.

"Father! Mother!" screamed Veronica wildly from the background.

"Dear me!" said the elderly gentleman. "We thought you had gone to bed, Veronica. Captain Forestier, is that you? This is an unexpected pleasure; but why are you endeavouring to hide that poker behind you?"

"Captain Forestier!" gasped Veronica. "It's not; it's a burglar I have had locked up in the pantry, and I thought you were burglars, too. Oh, mother!"

Then she burst into tears, while her father looked in mild inquiry at Captain

Forestier, whose face was now extremely red. But he recognised Veronica's father as a Mr. Lathom whom he had several times met in the company of his uncle, and for this slight acquaintance he blessed his lucky stars as he began his story.

"You see," he said, "my uncle, Mr. Copping, used to live here."

"I took the cottage over from him three months back," said Mr. Lathom.

"I was coming down to pay him a visit," continued Captain Forestier; "but my bicycle broke down, and I was late getting here. Just as I arrived, I saw the light go out in the room uncle used to use as a bedroom, so I thought that instead of knocking him up on such a wild night, I would just camp out in the kitchen. I was in the pantry getting something to eat, when Miss Lathom appeared and locked me in. Of course, I guessed at once how badly I had put my foot in it—uncle has played this trick of suddenly rushing away without a word to anyone before now—and as Miss Lathom evidently did not believe my explanations, I thought the fairest thing I could do was to stay where I was, and not frighten her any more than I could help."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lathom. "We ourselves returned rather unexpectedly, as my wife thought Veronica might be nervous at being alone so much. So she locked you in the pantry, eh?" Then

he began to chuckle. "Well, you must stay the night now, Captain," he continued. "And, Veronica, you will have to try and make amends to your prisoner."

"It was my fault," said Forestier, hastily.

"He never was my prisoner," said Veronica, hastily, "for he could have got out any time he liked."

"But I didn't like," said Forestier in a low tone, under cover of the laughter that Mr. and Mrs. Lathom had been politely endeavouring to repress. "I am quite content to remain your captive all my life, for you are the pluckiest girl I ever knew."

"Oh! but you are set free," said Veronica, blushing.

"But I won't be set free," retorted Forestier.

And he and his wife appear so happy together that there is no reason to suppose he has ever regretted his determination to surrender his liberty, and remain permanently "Veronica's Captive."

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## THE SUMMER RESORT

SHE wrote: "Let me describe Blue lake:

The house, I find, is rather small;  
The beds—they really make me ache,  
I don't get any sleep at all.

"The table, too, is rather poor;  
Children and nurses rule the day;  
No screens in window nor in door;  
The station's half a mile away.

"And then my room is scorching hot,  
So next week, dear, a move I'll make."  
He laid her letter down. "Great Scot!  
That's her description of a lake!"

## THE DIVERSIONS OF A PRINCESS

By A. CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

### II.—MR. (AND MRS.) VANE

"IT'S an impossible position," said Wisdom.

"Difficult, perhaps, but not impossible, because I'm in it," said Anne.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Wisdom.

"Oh, why?" said Anne. "I like married men for friends, for the same reason that boys like married women. There's no danger of being lured into an engagement in a careless minute. We are each free to give our unembarrassed attention to flirting as attractively as possible, without any fear of consequences."

"People talk," said Wisdom.

"The people who know me understand I'm harmless," said Anne. "The people who do not know me I really do not care about. It's a kind act to brighten up a person's life. Why shouldn't I brighten up a married man's? Most girls are too selfish."

"It's his wife's place to brighten up his life," said Wisdom.

"It's his wife's place to be restful, domestic, and comforting," said Anne. "A man must go outside and have a breath of air occasionally, to make him appreciate his home."

"If you married, should you like your husband to find another woman more attractive than you, even for a single moment?" said Wisdom.

"I'm not so silly as to imagine I could go on flirting with a man I married," said Anne. "Flirting is the evanescent scintillation of attractiveness; its flickering light conceals as much as it reveals,

and its charm lies in its intangibility. But fireworks in a fireplace, or rather, on one's hearth, would be simply bewildering and irritating. A man does not want to be continually puzzled and annoyed and made a fool of at home. He wants to love his wife in a selfish, lazy way and be quiet. Flirting doesn't in the least interfere with the domestic affection he bears to his wife."

"It makes the wife very jealous and unhappy," said Wisdom.

"Then she's an hysterical idiot," said Anne. "Married women have no poise. A man isn't jealous of his wife's *attachés* if he's certain he's far away first."

"A woman is never content to be first. She must be the only one," said Wisdom.

"I don't want to be the only one to Mr. Vane," said Anne; "nor to anyone else for that matter. I like men to have their affections firmly settled domestically, and just play about, with me, as Mr. Vane does. Of course he loves his wife best; he only *really* loves her."

"You're not in love," said Wisdom, "and Mrs. Vane is. It makes all the difference."

"Oh, well," said Anne, "George Vane and I are getting mutually tired of quarrelling with each other. After my varied society, he'll appreciate the peacefulness of his wife far more than he did before. A little saucy anchovy does make one so enjoy one's dinner afterwards."

"It's all very well to send him back to his wife now you've done with him,"



said Wisdom. "What of Mrs. Vane's pride?"

"I'm positively certain I shouldn't mind my husband flirting one bit," said Anne, "so long as I had his complete confidence."

"Should you like Mr. Vane to tell his wife all about you?" said Wisdom. "Talk you over with her?"

"He couldn't be such a cad!" said Anne.

"He'll have to give his wife his complete confidence, if he wants peace and quietness, when you've dropped him," said Wisdom.

"It's too humiliating even to think about," said Anne. "A little, simpering doll like Mrs. Vane!"

"She'll never be happy till she has her husband's confidence," persisted Wisdom, "and she'll do her best to make him give it her. If he doesn't, it will be a great triumph for you, of course."

"I don't want to triumph over Mrs. Vane," said Anne.

"It's triumphing to make her jealous," said Wisdom.

"It's perfectly ridiculous of her to be that!" said Anne. "Mr. Vane's admiration for me is so plainly superficial."

"I wonder you care to parade it, then," said Wisdom.

"I don't parade it," said Anne. "I can't help him cailing on me and trotting about in my train at parties, can I?"

"The mere fact of your allowing his ostentatious devotion gives people cause to think you are both pleased with it and proud of it," said Wisdom.

"Mr. Vane's admiration is of no consequence to me at all," said Anne, haughtily.

"Then is it worth while making Mrs. Vane unhappy because of it—even foolishly unhappy?" said Wisdom.

"It's a silly world," said Anne.

"It's a monogamous one," said Wisdom.

"Oh! why do men have wives!" said Anne. "If only men could be married, without having wives! Married men

are so much more interesting than unattached, stiff bachelors."

"Because there's a hint of 'forbidden fruit' about your friendship with them," said Wisdom. "Be honest with yourself!"

"Well, if I drop Mr. Vane, it's not very nice, as you say, for Mrs. Vane to feel I've tossed him back to her," said Anne. "I suppose it would be really unselfish to throw myself at his head till he found me a nuisance and dropped me himself."

"Very unselfish, but I wouldn't advise it," said Wisdom.

"Shall I drop Mr. Vane, and take up his silly little wife?" said Anne. "My word! *That* ought to flatter her!"

"Except that she'll always have a lurking suspicion that you're playing to the gallery in the form of her husband," said Wisdom.

"Oh, but I'll be hateful to Mr. Vane," said Anne. "I'll snub him and make him look a perfect idiot."

"You don't think Mrs. Vane will love you for making her husband look a fool!" said Wisdom. "Were you born yesterday, Anne?"

"I suppose you want me to drop them both, and let Mr. Vane talk me over with his wife," said Anne.

"Well, if he does," said Wisdom, "face your punishment like a man and not an hysterical girl. You've had your innings. Don't grudge Mrs. Vane hers!"

"Really, there are times when I have no use for the world!" said Anne. "Every form of enjoyment, however innocent, brings such a pack of stupid and unpleasant consequences."

"Well, it is an unsporting thing, to complain about paying your penny when you've eaten your cake!" said Wisdom.

"Oh, Mr. Vane shall immolate me on the altar of his wife!" said Anne, desperately. "I'll cut him to-morrow, and make him my enemy for ever. But, oh, my goodness, what a lot of horrid things he will be able to say about me to Mrs. Vane!"

"Then let this be a lesson to you!" said Wisdom. "You don't enjoy humiliating other women; or being humiliated yourself. These are the only alternatives if you flirt with married men."

"But I'm immolating myself and making thorough reparation," said Anne. "And Mr. Vane will tell his wife what a dead set I made at him, and how tired to death he is of me, and things like that, to ease his smarting vanity; and

she will soon be triumphantly happy again. And the fact remains that I've had a most amusing time of it the last few months, while my humiliation will only last a few days, at the end of which time I shall have forgotten about the whole affair; so from a strictly non-moral and common sensible point of view——"

"This is no place for me," said Wisdom, and left Anne promptly.

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## ONE PRAYER

LET me work and be glad,  
Oh, Lord, and I ask no more;  
With will to turn where the sunbeams burn  
At the sill of my workshop door.

Aforetime I prayed my prayer  
For the glory and gain of earth,  
But now grown wise and with opened eyes  
I have seen what the prayer was worth.

Give me my work to do,  
And peace of the task well done;  
Youth of the Spring and its blossoming,  
And the light of the moon and sun.

Pleasure of little things  
That never may pall or end,  
And fast in my hold no lesser gold  
Than the honest hand of a friend.

Let me forget in time  
Folly of dreams that I had;  
Give me my share of a world most fair—  
Let me work and be glad.

## BY POLLY'S AID

### A SCHOOL-TEACHER'S STORY

By ELEANOR B. PORTER

*Illustrated by Marie Latasa*



"TEACHER WANTS YOU."

THE schoolroom was very quiet. The master sat at the desk, wearily leaning his head on his hand, his eyes fixed on a boyish scrawl decorating the black-board across the room.

"This world is all a fleeting show for man's delusion given," he read, with a mild wonder as to how Bobby Green chanced to express so pessimistic a doctrine.

The misquotation, as it stood, was certainly in sad accord with his own ideas, but that was no reason why the children should learn the truth thus early in life. He could remember a time in his own past existence when he had believed quite the opposite of this dreary sentiment, but that was before She came into his life—or, rather, it was before She went out of his life. Unconsciously he heaved a sigh, and equally unconsciously Polly, on the front seat, echoed it.

Scott Fairfield, the new master of the district school at the village, had the name of being a "powerful hand for grammar and composition," but to-day he had outdone himself. After a

lengthy and painstaking explanation of the word "biography" he had startled the children by requesting each one to write the biography of some friend or relative; and it was with many laborious sharpenings of pencils and much rattling of paper that the youthful writers had begun their task.

As closing time drew near, Polly's sigh was echoed in all directions, and the abstracted gaze and fiercely bitten pencils of the discouraged biographers plainly testified that more time was needed for their unaccustomed task; so it was with the assurance that they could complete their work in the morning that Fairfield sent them home at four o'clock.

Polly Dean walked down the street in a brown study. She had listened faithfully to all the master said—that is, as faithfully as she could, when all the time Tommy Brown across the aisle was drawing on his slate those queer-looking pictures for her especial benefit—but now she was not quite sure that she knew what "biography" meant.

At the Deans' supper table that night, during a momentary lull in the conversation, came Polly's opportunity.

"Mamma, what's a biography?"

"Bless the child!—what is she up to now?" exclaimed Mrs. Dean in gentle surprise.

"It's writing a whole lot of nice things about somebody—praising him way to the skies, when it isn't true at all!" snapped Aunt Madge, who had just been reading the eulogy of a man she cordially disliked.



"It's telling of everything a person *did* do, and a few things he didn't," declared brother Ned with a shrug of his shoulders.

"My dear, it's a full account of one's life which one would never recognise as one's own," said her father, as he pushed back his chair; and in the general laugh that followed, Polly slipped away.

The biographies were to be read on Friday afternoon. When the appointed time arrived, the youthful authors betrayed some excitement and nervousness as they rose one after another to offer their contributions. The master looked down very kindly at Polly's flushed cheeks and shining eyes, but he started slightly as she announced in a shrill treble:—

"THE BIOGRAPHY OF MY AUNT  
MADGE.

"This beautiful lady was born, oh, I don't know how many years ago, but ever so many—much as twenty, maybe. She isn't dead yet, so I don't know when she died. She is tall and slim, and has got a lot of shiny gold hair piled all up on top of her head, and she is the prettiest lady I ever saw. I love her very, very much. She is never cross, and never says, 'Run away.' I don't know anybody else who don't say 'Run away' sometimes. But this beautiful lady is very sad. Sometimes when I look at her I want to cry, but I

don't know why, so I don't. Once upon a time she had a lover. I know this because she has got his picture upstairs in her room. I don't think he is as pretty as she is, and I told her so one day. She looked awful funny, and took the picture away quick. He looks a little like my teacher, only my teacher has got whiskers, and he hasn't. This lovely lady has not been here very long, but I wish she would stay for ever. That is all I know about her.

"POLLY  
ANN DEAN."

Scott Fairfield's face was white and his voice was very low and husky as he called on Tommy Brown for the next biography.

When Polly started for home that night, she found the master beside her.

"May I walk with you, dear?" he asked, with a wonderfully sweet smile.

Polly was raised at once to the seventh heaven of delight. She blushed and hung her head, but she looked sideways out of her eyes to see if Mary Ellen and Susie were watching—the master was not wont to be so gracious.

"Do you think your Aunt Madge is at home to-night?" questioned Fairfield again, with a strange diffidence.

Polly nodded.

"Perhaps you will take me to see her," he suggested, almost deferentially, and then he was strangely silent.

Polly trotted happily along, vainly



"SHE ISN'T DEAD YET, SO I DON'T KNOW WHEN SHE DIED."

trying to bring her short steps to the long strides of the preoccupied man at her side. Now and then she stole an upward glance at his face, and once she found him smiling.

"It must be Madge," he was thinking. "It is just like her own proud self to make no sign. Pride! What was pride worth, anyhow? He was sure he would throw his to the winds. He would humble himself, too—in the dust. Madge was worth it—the dear girl! Misunderstanding? Bah!—away with the whole thing! He had found her at last—Madge!"

His blood was coursing madly through his veins and he was tingling to his finger-tips when Polly opened the gate before a pretty white cottage; but he contrived to walk with proper sedateness behind his small guide, who was fairly quivering with the delightful importance of the occasion. He was pacing nervously up and down the parlour, however, when Polly disappeared in quest of Aunt Madge.

"Teacher wants you!" exclaimed the child as she burst unceremoniously into her aunt's room a minute later.

"Wants *me*!" queried the mystified young woman, with a fleeting memory of the dread import of those words in the long ago after some schoolgirl prank. "Me—did you say, dear? It must be your mother, Polly"—in sudden sternness—"is it possible you have been up to mischief?"

Polly shook her head with decision.

"No, not the littlest bit! He said he wanted my Aunt Madge," asserted the small girl, excitedly.

With a furtive glance into the mirror, and a hasty touch here and there, Aunt Madge allowed herself to be escorted to the parlour.

Scott Fairfield started quickly forward as the door opened, but his impassioned "Madge" died on his lips, and his outstretched hands dropped to his side. Polly was leading a small, dark-haired, bright-eyed woman up to him and saying—

"This is my Aunt Madge, Mr. Fairfield."

Every vestige of self-possession left the master of the village school, and he stumbled and blundered in hopeless confusion, while his face went from white to red, and red to white.

"I—er—oh—there is some mistake—er—I'm delighted, I'm sure—" then to Polly with wrathful recklessness—"Why, child, you said she was tall and—" he stopped short with a sudden realisation of the vivid colour that was staining scarlet the face of the pretty little woman at his side.

"Apparently my niece has been favouring you with my personal description—and the reality disappoints you," she began frigidly, but with the suggestion of a twinkle in her eyes—there was something wonderfully ludicrous in the picture of confusion before her.

The poor man opened his mouth to speak, but Polly came to his rescue.

"Papa said you wouldn't recognise it!" said she, gleefully.

"Recognise what?" questioned Aunt Madge, turning to Polly in surprise.

"Your biography, of course, and you said it was praising 'em way to the skies when it wasn't true, too!"

Aunt Madge coloured and bit her lip, and the ghost of a smile flickered for an instant across the distressed face of the man; then he gathered all his scattered wits and made a mighty effort.

"I sincerely beg your pardon. The fault was all my own. I was led, by what this little maid said in her biography, to think that in her Aunt Madge I had discovered a long-lost friend. I only hope you will kindly excuse my awkward stupidity when you realise how great must have been my surprise as I saw, not my friend, but an entire stranger enter the room." Then he turned to Polly with a faint smile, but a deep pain far down in his eyes. "I fear, my dear, that my meaning was not quite clear to you about the biog-



raphy. I did not intend that you should imagine it all."

"I didn't!" asserted Polly, stoutly. "I was telling all the time about a beautiful lady that I love very dearly, and it's all true, every bit of a word. It's Miss Weston, over at Cousin Mabel's. I just wrote about her for Aunt Madge's biography—that's all," added Polly, with a sob in her voice.

"She means Madge Weston who is visiting my brother's family across the street; the young lady has suddenly become Polly's idol," explained Aunt Madge hastily, marvelling at the great light which transformed the face of the man before her, as the name passed her lips.

Five minutes later, he had mingled

hasty adieus and apologies, and had turned quick steps toward the house across the way.

Aunt Madge, with a sympathetic little thrill for that other woman's coming joy, saw through the window the door of the opposite house open and close on Fairfield's stalwart form; then Polly was surprised with a spasmodic hug and a fervent kiss from her usually undemonstrative auntie.

The next morning Bobby Green's scrawl on the blackboard had disappeared, and in its place, in the master's bold handwriting, was:—

Life, believe, is not a dream  
So dark as sages say;  
Oft a little morning rain  
Foretells a pleasant day.





# THE IDLERS' CLUB

By ROBERT BARR

No. 33. Since the last *Idlers' Club* was written, the magazine has moved from Norfolk Street to Henrietta Street, for particulars of which flitting see small bills. The address is now 33, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. It is true that we might have placed the imposing letter head "*Bedford Mansions*" upon our stationery, for that is the name of the edifice in which the IDLER is lodged; but we are modest people up here, and content ourselves with a simple numeral. About a year ago I wrote a few tender words in praise of the office I occupied in Norfolk Street, with its balcony overlooking the river. I confess I left the apartment with regret; but there were no other rooms to be had in the building, and so the IDLER offices were scattered up and down the street: three rooms on one side, and four on the other, distributed among three separate houses, which we found to be exceedingly inconvenient. So now we are in the centre of the magazine quarter, with nine rooms all on one floor in *Bedford Mansions*, and there is *Covent Garden Market* at the end of the street, where one may procure any little article that "*Little Mary*" requires, to make an allusion to J. M. Barrie's latest play.

I now expect to exert a benignant influence on the magazine literature of England, and this not alone in the IDLER, for, as I have said, the new premises are in the centre of periodical publication, and by keeping my right eye open I can oversee the enterprising establishment of C. Arthur Pearson, while by twisting the left a bit, I look round the corner on the efforts of Sir George Newnes to make a living. I am pleased to be able to state authoritatively that no fear of starvation confronts either of these gentlemen during the

coming winter. Each one will pay handsome dividends.

I occasionally meet one  
*Why?* or other of them on the street down below, and, without wishing to boast at all, I may say that they talk with me in as friendly a manner as if I were a millionaire. I think, however, that Sir George Newnes owes me an explanation. The moment I came into his neighbourhood he began burying his money. I should like to know why. He planted five hundred sovereigns, a little while ago, in a secluded place for some benighted reader of *Tit-Bits* to discover, and since then he has been hiding a hundred pounds here and there over the surface of England. I wish some reader of the IDLER would pick up these coins and send them on to me, so that I might return them to Sir George. This refunding, on my part, would probably allay any unjust suspicions that have arisen in his mind regarding me, and as we were talking over the matter I could point out to him that Bow Street Police Station is almost as near to the IDLER office as his own premises are, and therefore he need have no fear because I have unexpectedly become a neighbour of his. When you have found the gold please register the packet, and remember that the address of the IDLER has changed.

We who are in the  
*A New Magazine.* legitimate magazine trade have recently had great reason to complain of unfair competition. A pair of amateurs have ventured where even a wise man might fear to tread. In the early autumn the Right Honourable Arthur Balfour issued his magazine quite unexpectedly, entitled "*Economic Notes*," but, if he

asks me, I think "Home Notes" is a much better name for a periodical. Mr. Balfour secured a first-rate publisher, and I regret to state that the success of the venture was much greater than it deserved. He produced a magazine of thirty-two pages printed on paper not nearly as good as the average monthly consists of. He gave us no illustrations, which is a tremendous saving in the cost of production. He published no good stories, and then had the cheek to ask a shilling nett, while we, giving four times as much, are glad to get half the money, with the bloom knocked off in the shape of discount here and there. The curious thing is that he got his shillings in by the hatful, but the joke was on the public after all, for when they asked for the second number of the magazine, hoping to get the continuation of the serial Mr. Balfour had started, they found that the editor had pocketed the shilling nett, and that he had no intention of getting out a second number. And now these foolish people who parted with their hard earned money don't know whether the hero married the heroine or not, and are unable to find out what the detective discovered.

So much for Mr. Balfour and his victims. Now *Saved!* for Mr. Chamberlain, who is a much tougher customer to deal with, and who is causing great anxiety in the magazine world. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain has a well equipped magazine office in Birmingham; but instead of charging a shilling a number he is sending his periodicals out free, which I hold is distinctly unfair to the regular publishing trade. Mr. Chamberlain illustrates some of his leaflets, and keeps up his continued story week after week. I suppose that when he gets people interested he will put on a price. He seems to be working for the future, whereas Mr. Balfour wanted cash down on the nail nett. I think Mr. Chamberlain's serial story has something to do with the

saving of the Empire. I gather this much from his leaflets because they are free; but I refused to pay the shilling nett for Mr. Balfour's effort, therefore I don't know what his romance is about. I have often thought of saving the Empire myself, but I have been kept so busy looking after my own affairs that I never had time. I throw out this suggestion to these two interlopers in the magazine field. How would it be if every man quit shouting and attended to his own business? Perhaps the Empire then would get along first rate. Talking about the Empire and the saving of it, my advice to the constant reader is not to lose any sleep over the matter. The Empire has always been going to the dogs, and is always being saved by somebody. Sixty-seven years ago Judge Haliburton, of Nova Scotia, wrote the following little piece of wit and wisdom regarding the question:—

“As for the English  
*The Barrel.* Empire, it's the greatest  
the world ever seed. The  
sun never sets on it. The banner of  
England floats on every breeze, and on  
every sea. So many parts and pieces  
require good management and great  
skill to bind together, for it tante a  
whole of itself, like a single stick-mast,  
but a spliced one, composed of numerous  
pieces and joints. Now the most beautiful  
thing of the kind, not political, but  
mechanical, is a barrel. I defy any one  
but a rael cooper to make one so as to  
hold water; indeed, it tante every  
cooper can do it, for there are bunglin'  
coopers as well as bunglin' statesmen.  
Now, see how many staves there are in a  
barrel, how well they all fit, how tight  
they all come together, how firm and  
secure the hoops keep them in their  
places. Well, when it's right done, it  
don't leak one drop, and you can stand  
it up an eend, or lay it down on its side,  
or roll it over and over, and still it seems  
as if it was all solid wood. Not only  
that, but clap a thousand of them right



a-top of one another, and they wont squash in, but bear any weight you choose to put on them. But, sir, cut the hoops, and where is your barrel? Why, a heap of old iron hoops and wooden staves. Now in time, the heat of the sun, and rollin' about, and what not, shrinks a cask, as a matter of course, and the hoops all loosen, and you must drive them up occasionally to keep all tight and snug. A little attention this way, and it will last for ever a'most. Now, somehow or other, the British appear to me of late years to revarse this rule, and instead of tightening the hoops of their great body politick, as they had ought to do, they loosen them, and if they continue to do so much longer, that great Empire will tumble to pieces as sure as we are a-talkin' here."

Judge Haliburton was *Sam Slick*, born at Nova Scotia, and died in Isleworth. He was a prophet, not without honour in his own country, for at the age of twenty-four he became a member of the Legislative Assembly, and at thirty-two was Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. He was Judge of the Supreme Court at forty-four, but two or three years later resigned in order to come to England, where he was elected a Member of Parliament. Long before this he had become world famous as the author of "Sam Slick." Sam was supposed to be a Yankee from Connecticut, who made humorous remarks on current politics, and told numerous good stories to illustrate his points. Thirty-one years ago a poet in the London *Figaro* complained that no such man as Sam Slick ever existed. Here are two of his verses:—

"Where is the object of my youthful wonder  
Who met me in the pages of Sam Slick?  
Who opened every sentence with 'By Thunder,'  
And whittled always on a bit of stick.  
The more the crowd of friends around me thickens,  
The less my chance to meet him seems to be.  
Why did he freely show himself to Dickens,  
To Dixon, Sala, Trollope, not to me?"

"Gone are the Yankees of my early reading,  
Faded the Yankee land of eager quest;  
I meet with culture, courtesy, good breeding,  
Art, letters, men and women of the best.  
Oh, fellow-Britons, all my hopes are undone,  
Take counsel of a disappointed man;  
Don't come out here, but stay at home in London,  
And seek in books the true American."

In spite of the wail of  
*A Yarn.* this versifier, the Americans themselves universally regarded Sam Slick as a correct, if humorously exaggerated piece of characterisation. Here is one of Sam's stories, which shows him to have been the W. W. Jacobs of his day.

"I mind a trick I once played on old 'Tarnal Death,' as we called Captain Ebenezer Fathom, the skipper I went to South Sea with. He know'd every inch of the coast as well as he did of his own cabin; and whenever he throw'd the lead, and looked at what sort of bottom it showed, he know'd as well where he was as if he was in sight of land. He did beat all, that's a fact, and proper proud he was of it too, a-boastin' and a-crackin' of it for everlastingly. So, afore I goes aboard, off I slips to a sand-pit on Polly Coffin's betterments, where they got sand for the Boston iron foundries, and fills a bag with it and puts it away in my trunk. Well, we was gone the matter of three years on that voyage afore we reached home, and, as we neared the Nantuckit coast, Captain Ebenezer comes down to the cabin and turns in, and says he:—

"'Sam,' says he, 'we are in soundin' now, I calculate; run on till twelve o'clock, and then heave-to and throw the lead, for it is as dark as Comingo, and let me see what you fetches up, and, tarnal death! I'll tell you to the sixteenth part of an inch what part of the thirteen united univarsal worlds we be in.'

"'What will you bet,' says I, 'you do?'

"'I'll bet you a pound of the best Varginy pigtail,' says he; 'for I am out of 'baccy this week past, and have been chawin' oakum until my jaws fairly stick



together with the tar. Yesterday, when you turned in I throw'd out a signal of distress, and brought a Britisher down on us five miles out of his way; but, cuss him, when he found out I only wanted a pig of tabacco, he swore like all vengeance, and hauled his wind right off. What tarnal gulls and fools they be, ain't they? Yes, I'll bet you a pound of the best.'

"'Done,' says I; 'I'll go to my death on it you don't tell; for I never will believe no soul can steer by the lead, for sand is sand everywhere; and who can tell the difference?'

"'Any fool,' said he, 'with half an eye, in the pitchiest, inkyest, lampblackiest night that was ever created. I didn't get here into the cabin by jumpin' through the skylight, as national officers do, but worked my way in from before the mast. Tarnal death to me! a man that don't know soundin's when he sees it is fit for nothin' but to bait shark-hooks with. Soundin's, eh? Why, I was born in soundin's, sarved my time out in soundin's, and made a man of in soundin's, and a pretty superfine fool I must be if I don't know 'em. Come, make yourself scarce, for I am sleepy; and he was a-snorin' afore I was out of the cabin.

"Well, at twelve o'clock we hove-to, and sure enough found sand at fifty fathoms, as he said we would. What does I do but goes and takes another lead, and dips it into the water to wet it, and then stirs it in the bag of sand I had stowed away in my trunk, and then goes and wakes up the skipper.

"'Hollo! shipmate,' says I, 'here's the lead: we have got a sandy bottom in fifty fathoms, as you said.'

"'Exactly,' says he, 'didn't I tell you so? I can feel my way all along the coast when it's so dark you can't hear yourself speak. I know every foot of it as well as if I made it myself. Give me the lead.'

"As soon as he took it and looked at it, he jumpt right up an eend in bed.

"'Hollo!' said he, 'what the devil's this? Give me my specs, that's a good feller, for I don't see as well as I used to did.'

"So I goes to the table and hands him his spectacles, and says I:—

"'I knew you couldn't tell no more than anyone else by the lead. That 'ere boast of yourn was a bam, and nothin' else. I'll trouble you for your pound of Varginy pigtail; just enter it in the log, will you?'

"'Heavens and airth!' said he, a-mutterin' to himself, 'old Nantuck is sunk; an airthquake, by gum! What a dreadful piece of business this is.'

"He looked as white as chalk: his eyes started must out of his head, and his hair looked a hundred ways for Sunday. Lord, how frightened he looked; he was quite onfakilised.

"'Tarnal death to me!' says he, 'bring the candle here agin;' and then he wiped his eyes fust, and then his specs, and took another long look at it, as steady as if he was a drawin' a bead on it fine with his rifle.

"After a space he jumps right out of bed on the floor, and bawls out as loud as thunder to the hands on deck:—

"'Bout ship, boys!' said he, 'bout ship for your lives, as quick as wink! Old Nantuck has gone for it as sure as rates, it has by gosh! I hope I may die this blessed instant minute of time if that 'ere lead hasn't gone right slap into old Aunt Polly Coffin's sandhole!'"

I had the pleasure of meeting a man the other day who knew as much about the bottom of the sea as did Sam Slick's captain. There being an "R" in the month, I thought I might as well investigate the oyster business, and find out by practical experience whether we are now in any danger of typhoid fever through eating them as we seemed to be last year. I may add, however, that before risking my precious life for the benefit of the public, a celebrated scien-

tist had shown me the report he is about to issue that the oysters of Whitstable are beyond reproach. So I ventured on three dozen, accompanied by brown bread and butter, washed down by a foreign temperance drink they call Chablis. The man who knew so much about what there was under the waves is Mr. Gann, of Whitstable, who put an oyster smack at the disposal of the party from London. He and Britain seem to own the ocean between them. We appeared to be sailing over his property most of the day. This property is somewhat wet, and needs drainage badly, if Mr. Gann ever expects to raise anything else than oysters on it, or divide it out into building plots, as enterprising companies are doing all around the coast from Whitstable to Margate.

In early life I had fallen in love with the American oyster, an affection that was no more reciprocated than was the case with the oysters and The Walrus and the Carpenter. America is fortunate in possessing a great variety of oysters—the largest and the smallest in the world are there. You may remember that when Thackeray was having his first dinner in New York they placed before him half a dozen oysters each the size of a dessert plate, and apologised for their smallness, saying it was not a good season for oysters, but that they would get him a bigger assortment the next time he came. In an inadvertent moment, and in a London club, I made the statement that American oysters were better than those grown around the coasts of Britain, and the trip to Whitstable, while not exactly the outcome of this rash statement, was nevertheless expected to result in a recantation on my part.

These months with an  
 "R." "R" in them are not supposed to be the best of the year for a marine trip, but, probably because of the high character of the members who partook in the excursion,

we were blessed with a day much finer, and sunnier, and warmer, than England had seen during the recent so-called summer. The oysters were induced to come aboard the lugger by means of a dredge, which is a sort of receptacle like ancient chain armour with very large links, and this is tossed overboard at the end of a rope. It grieves me to state that the instant it was flung upon the waves some member of the party, with a betting instinct which he should have left on shore, at once got up a pool, each man contributing sixpence, setting down on a slip of paper the number of oysters he expected to appear when the haul was made. I look on this as a most immoral proceeding, because I lost each time. The dredge scraped along the bottom of the sea for five minutes, and I put on the paper that we would pull in twenty-six oysters, whereas the actual number counted out on the deck was seven hundred and forty-nine. I shuddered to think what this accumulation would have cost in a first-class London hotel.

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They were the Royal  
*A Spell.* Whitstable brand, and the stalwart, bronzed dredgers knew the name of the oysters as soon as they pulled them up, although no designating letters were stamped on the shell. Very few of the oyster catchers are Oxford graduates, but they are a fine body of men, and understand more about what is to be found on the floor of the sea than any professor in the two chief universities.

A reporter went down to Whitstable the other day to learn something about what they call in the *Daily Telegraph* the "seductive bivalve." He said to one of the fishermen:—

"How do you get the oysters from the bottom of the sea?"

"Well, sir," said the fisherman, "we don't use a hook and line to them, but we just drags them up with a drudge."



"With a drudge?" echoed the reporter. "How do you spell that word?"

"We spell it dree-r-u-dge; but you can spell it how you like."

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I was forced to admit

*A Choice.* that the Royal Native was deliciously eatable; but I said it was so long since I had tasted an American oyster that I should hesitate to make any comparison between the two, lacking a sample of the American "succulent shell fish," to quote again from the *Telegraph*.

"Which American oyster was your favourite?" asked Mr. Gann.

We were a long way from the United States, therefore, as my word could not be put to the proof, I said at a venture:—

"Well, the East River oysters are very nice."

Mr. Gann turned to the man at the helm, and said:—

"Lay her course for the East River bed."

"Good gracious!" said I in alarm; "I'm not going over to New York in an open boat."

But we turned instead towards Holland, and after sailing half a mile or so, threw down the dredge and took up several hundred fine East River oysters. I call that about the meanest trick that ever was played on an innocent man. There in two heaps lay the Royal Whitstables and the East Rivers, so I had to make my choice. I faced the situation boldly.

"Gentlemen," said I, "the best oyster that can be eaten is——"

(To be continued in our next.)

All the noted oysters in the world seem to lie about in Whitstable Bay. There were great big Portuguese oysters in one part that must be nearly as large as those Thackeray had in New York. There were Dutch oysters and French oysters, and the smacks-men found their way over that seemingly featureless water as accurately as one might thread a course through Covent Garden Market, picking

out any particular brand of the "esculent pearl casket," as the *Daily Telegraph* would say. All they need under those sparkling waters is some acres of brown bread and butter, adjoining a layer of well-filled porter bottles and pewter tankards, to make Whitstable the most charming summer resort in the world. I came away resolved to reform my life, and to lead hereafter a noble existence as an oyster pirate.

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From Whitstable I ran

*Sheppey.* to Sittingbourne, so called because you have to sit so long on the platform to wait for a train. From there I ultimately reached Queenborough, on the island of Sheppey. Now Sheppey is interesting from the fact that a new light railway has been built there clear across the island, from the west to east coast, for nine tempestuous miles, over hill and down dale. Yet the little train is of a most modern description, being vestibuled and corrodored just as if it were the *edition de luxe* running to Nice. A friendly guard comes through and charges you ninepence for a ticket that takes you the length of the line. He furnishes the ticket, punches a hole in the ninepenny part, and then sits down and chats with you, telling you who owns the farms on each side of the railway. I wanted to keep the ticket, for it is the most entertaining bit of literature, about six inches by four rectangular, containing much useful information regarding the rules under which the light railway works. But the guard gently detached it from me at the end of the line, because he had to keep a check on himself, to see that he returns the right amount of money to the company. He was a most useful and energetic man. When we came to a road-crossing, the train stopped, he got out and opened the two gates, then the train pulled through and he closed the two gates, coming after us in a gentle trot.



There is not much to see at the end of the line, except a very lonely coast-guard station looking out over the North Sea. Yet a land company has bought several miles of that coast, and has given it a great name, which I now forget. Gaudy posters have been issued, showing crowded sands with people flaunting about in wonderful bathing costumes. These throngs had probably gone back to town with the coming of autumn, for the only person visible was a stout coastguardsman whose back was towards me, his eyes glued to a telescope, gazing out on the fathomless sea, as the *Telegraph* would say. He must have been seeing something interesting through the glass, for he heard nothing of my quiet approach, and when I said to him:—

“I beg pardon, but could you tell me——” he gave one terrified shriek, and nearly shattered his glass by letting

it fall on the ground. He turned a bronzed, panic-stricken face upon me that would have become pale if it could, and cried with a half-panting gasp:—

“God bless me! you’re the first man I’ve seen for two weeks.”

He was out of humanity’s reach; he was finishing his journey alone. Never hearing the sweet music of speech, and started at the sound of my own.

I came back through Minster, a most picturesque old town situated on a hill, with a grand church that is one of the most ancient in the kingdom. I stayed there the night, and have no hesitation in saying that the most comfortable and interesting club I ever joined was the back parlour conclave of the Waterloo Inn, where one by one the intellectual people drop in, and there was a feast of reason and a flow of mild and bitter in pewter tankards. I hope to return to picturesque Minster, and once more meet my Waterloo there.

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## THE GOLDEN MEAN

HE that holds fast the golden mean,  
And lives contentedly between

The little and the great,  
Feels not the wants that pinch the poor,  
Nor plagues that haunt the rich man’s door,  
Embittering all his state.

The tallest pines feel most the power  
Of wintry blasts; the loftiest tower

Comes heaviest to the ground.  
The bolts that spare the mountain’s side  
His cloud-capt eminence divide,  
And spread the ruin round.

—Translated from “HORACE.”





Henry J. Peck '03



## THE ROMANCE—A PICTURE

By HOWARD PILE

### THE GARDEN.

IT was a quaint garden—an old garden of two hundred and fifty years ago. It was surrounded by a high stone wall, which shut it out altogether from the world, except as you looked out through the gateway into the perspective beyond. It was the garden of a wealthy citizen, and, though you might not see the house from where you stood, the fine old red brick pile looked down with shining windows upon the straight and formal paths.

The garden was all the creation of one man; his hands alone had built it. He had set the hedges of box trees in their straight and formal lines; he had arranged the flower beds in their regular order; he had smoothed the level lawn that lay to one side; he had stretched out the silver ribbon of pathway that led from the house to the gate.

It lay silent and secluded, a fit place for lovers' meeting. The cold weather was barely over, and the spring had hardly come. In the sun perhaps it was warm; but no doubt in shady places it was yet chill with the breath of winter.

### THE CAVALIER.

The Cavalier presented a fine figure; at once sober, rich, and dignified—for he had just completed his toilet. The appointed time had come when he was to meet that pretty Puritan, and he knew that she was already waiting for him. He set the hat very carefully upon his head, and looked at himself critically in the glass. His cloak was of black velvet lined with purple silk, and the soft folds hung straight from the shoulders. It became him well, and he knew it. Such a cloak might well soften the heart of the girl whom he was so soon to meet.

He saw that his lace collar was a little frayed at the edges, but still it looked very well at a short distance. It shone like silver against the black velvet of his jacket.

The room was close up under the eaves, and the light came strongly in at the one window. The brilliant lights and powerful shadows made the Cavalier's face look like a painting by Rembrandt—a resemblance heightened by the broad-brimmed hat adorned with its black ostrich feathers, that threw a shadow across the brows and upper part of his face. The creamy-white sword-belt cut across the black of the velvet and the basket hilt of the sword glimmered in the shadow of the cloak.

The Cavalier pulled up the tops of his soft leather riding-boots, and again he gave a last and final look at himself in the glass. Yes, his appearance was all that could be desired; still, he cocked his hat a little more jauntily with a touch of his thumb.

Then, throwing the cloak over the hand that rested on the hilt of his sword, he departed to his tryst with his little Puritan, descending the steep and narrow stairway with a swaggering step and a loud clatter of noisy boot-heels.

### THE PRETTY PURITAN.

She was seated, waiting for him—a little wearily, a little impatiently. Now and then she tapped her foot.

Her smooth, comely young face had a vague, preoccupied look. The simple grey dress fitted her figure snugly. Her clear skin gave forth pearly lustres in the shadows of her black-lined Puritan hood. She had the look of the daughter of a well-to-do citizen of the time.

## THE IDLER

It was impossible to guess what were her thoughts as she sat there.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was the sound of footsteps; she looked quickly up. He was there! She had been waiting for him long, but there was hardly any change in her expression, now that he had come; there was neither joy nor displeasure exhibited upon her face.

She arose very quickly, and stepped a pace or two forward, and then stood still. He came as quickly to her, and she reached him her hand. He took it and bent over it, but did not set his lips to it.

They stood silent and motionless.

## THE MASTER SPIRIT.

The Master Spirit stood and watched that meeting. He had ordained it—he had brought it about, and now he contemplated it critically and remotely. The two stood as though not seeing him—each intent upon the other.

Then he spoke to the Cavalier. "Sullivan," he said, "turn your face a little to the right," and the model did as the artist bade him.

Then the Master Spirit mixed the colours upon his palette and began to darken the shadows under the hat of the Cavalier in the picture. For I (who am his teacher) had criticised a weakness in the darks.

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## HOPE

By ARTHUR MANSBRIDGE

FAR-VISIONED Hope, thy tender hand  
Still beckons through the night of pain;  
By thee life's fading fires are fanned  
To warmth and light again.

When friendly trust has been betrayed  
And fades the mirage in the blue,  
Eternal Hope, all undismayed,  
Yet whispers: "Still pursue."

Fair Hope, thy heavenly garments trail  
O'er all the paths of wayward youth;  
Though all the creeds of men should fail,  
Thou art a living truth.

When sorrow o'er our pathway lies,  
And tolls the deep, momentous bell,  
Still breathes through all our tears and sighs  
Hope's message: "All is well."

When we approach at last the grave,  
And feeble hearts with fear despond,  
Hope's pinions still above us wave,  
And beckon us—beyond.



*Illustrated by Clewin S. V. Harcourt*

**I**T was a sweet-faced, elderly woman who introduced herself to Cleveland as Mrs. Ainslee, and who took his card. A moment later she ushered him into the drawing-room, and said that her daughter would be down directly.

As he waited, Cleveland recollected that he had been somewhat annoyed over Thompson's smiling refusal to impart any information concerning the personal appearance of this girl, the story of whose abrupt introduction to adversity had so enlisted his sympathy, and he now found himself intensely curious to see what Miss Ainslee would be like.

In the furnishings of the room in which he sat, the young man readily recognised the remains of former prosperity, and everything, from the tastefully framed etchings on the wall to the arrangement of the cups on the tiny tea-table, betrayed the instinct of good breeding. He had no doubt as to who had arranged the things when the girl whom he had called to see came in. He also ceased to blame Thompson for his silence; he readily understood now how utterly inadequate any description of his would have been.

"Have you really been standing all this time?" she asked, as he turned towards her.

"I have a weakness for etchings, and

yours kept me admiring," he said, sitting down, as she set the example.

"Mr. Thompson's card says only: 'Introducing Mr. M. K. Cleveland,'" she went on. "Are you Mr. Cleveland, the writer?"

He nodded, and was vain enough to be glad that she seemed somewhat impressed.

"You see that your name is a familiar one, even in matter-of-fact Birmingham, where we come from," she continued. Then, more diffidently: "Was it about typing that you came to see me?"

"Yes, Miss Ainslee," he said, "it was. I wanted to ask if you could take my manuscripts and make fair copies of them for me. You see, up to now, I've never been able to discover anyone who seemed willing to use any 'brains' in putting a story into shape for me, so I've just turned things in to my publishers as they were written by myself. But that isn't very satisfactory to me; and, besides, I am guilty of handwriting that must provoke rage in the bosoms of those who eventually have to put it into type. So last evening, when Mr. Thompson showed me how neatly you prepared his sermons, I asked if he thought you would undertake my stories, and he felt sure that you would; so here I am."

"Why, yes," she replied, "I should like to very much indeed. As this is



business, Mr. Cleveland, I will say frankly that I think I shall be able to type your stories satisfactorily. I was in college when my father died. But perhaps Mr. Thompson has told you about that, and how my mother and I came on here, and about my teaching? We took this house when we came, and, you see, we've kept some of our pretty things."

Cleveland bowed. He felt a distinct sense of gratification over Mrs. Ainslee's having been able to retain at least one decidedly pretty thing.

"Then," she continued, "our school broke up, and Mr. Thompson, whose wife is an old friend of ours, suggested that I should learn typewriting, and found me a good deal of work, mostly for clergymen; so, you see, I should be glad to have yours. Did Mr. Thompson tell you my terms?"

"Yes," he said, hurriedly. It seemed like sacrilege to speak of money to this girl. "I do not think we shall quarrel over them."

"When will you send me some work?" she asked.

"I will bring it, if I may, to-morrow," he said, rising. "I have just finished two stories."

As Cleveland walked down the quiet little Kensington street in which the Ainslees had found a *pied-à-terre*, he was in high spirits. Hereafter, he told himself, his work would go to his publishers neatly and understandingly typewritten. The young writer, however, was quite aware that the intense satisfaction which possessed him was due much less to the discovery of a capable amanuensis than to the fact that he had just met an amazingly pretty girl, as well as a cultivated and refined one.

He also felt more than ever indebted to Providence for having endowed him with a fertile imagination and a prolific pen, for now every new story would mean an excellent excuse for a visit to the attractive little drawing-

room which he had just reluctantly quitted.

Next day, he carried to Miss Ainslee the two stories of which he had spoken to her, and they came back to him promptly with the typewritten copies. These delighted him. She had not, of course, made any changes in his diction, but Cleveland's quick eye discovered three slight alterations in the paragraphing, and realised that in each case the change was for the better. He said so in a note.

During the weeks that followed he amazed his publishers by the amount of work which he turned out. It never was necessary to "prod" him now. They formerly had thought it well to do so when he was lazy, for Cleveland's stories had a decided vogue.

Of course, all the new stories had to be typewritten, and it was wonderful how much talking over each of them required between their author and Gertrude Ainslee, and how often it was necessary for him to lean over and closely scrutinise a manuscript as she held it in her hands. And no one but the girl herself knew, as time went on, how thoroughly she had come to admire the intelligence that had planned the stories which she put into type, and the manliness that gave to them the charm which none of their readers were able to resist.

And when Miss Ainslee's mother remonstrated with her sometimes for bending over her machine until late in the evening, and regretted the necessity for her daughter's working so hard, the dear old lady suspected not that only that daughter herself was to blame for entirely forgetting, during a part of the day, the duty which she owed to her clerical clients, while listening for hours to the conversation of Mr. Morris Cleveland, who devoted exactly three minutes of that time to the urgent business on which he had come.

And so it went on, until one day Cleveland received a note, signed "Ger-

rude Louise Ainslee," which brought him into her presence without delay. She had never pretended to be otherwise than extremely glad to see him, and there was no change in her manner now.

"I asked you to come," she said, "because I had finished your 'Make-believe Cynic,' that you told me your publishers were in a hurry for; and then I wanted to tell you that—I won't be able to write your stories any more."

"What!" he cried. "And may I ask why not?"

"I am truly sorry," she said, "for I know it will inconvenience you; but, for certain reasons, I can't do it any longer. Some day I will tell you what my reasons are. I have a plan now, and, if it should prove successful, I may be able to give up typewriting altogether."

"Have you passed beyond the dreams of avarice?" he asked. "Can no glittering offer of mine tempt you? Are the thrice-weary compositors again to be confronted with my hieroglyphics?" What he meant was: "Are you tired of having me come here? Am I no longer to look into your face and to hear your voice?"

"You are not offended, are you?" she asked.

"Not if you will agree to one thing," he said. "I have been coming here



"OFTEN IT WAS NECESSARY FOR HIM TO LEAN OVER AND CLOSELY SCRUTINISE A MANUSCRIPT."

for three months now, Miss Ainslee, and our talks have grown very pleasant to me. Won't you let me call as a friend hereafter? I would have asked this before, but feared you might think





"WHILE LISTENING FOR HOURS TO THE CONVERSATION OF MR. MORRIS CLEVELAND."



it taking advantage of our arrangement. But now that that is concluded, I should like to be numbered among your friends."

"But you know so many rich girls," she said, "and—oh! you understand. I know what those girls' surroundings are, you see, because I've been one. Wouldn't you notice the difference?"

"Excuse me," he said, "but I noticed the difference between you and other girls some time ago."

"You may come," she said, smiling.

"My I drive round for you to-morrow afternoon?" he asked. "I want you to meet 'Flash,' my charger, you know."

"Wasn't it 'Flash' that took the prize at the show?" she asked with keen interest.

"'Flash' it was," he said, and his voice showed how delighted he was that she remembered. "I'll be here about three."

He rose to go.

"We begin, then," he said, "to be out-and-out friends, and cease being——"

"Business acquaintances," she suggested.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some months after the occurrence of the talk just reported, a substantial London publisher — proprietor, too, of the *National Magazine*—was in the act of discussing certain future arrangements with his confidential man.

"No, indeed," he was saying, "there's no question about those stories of Gertrude Ainslee's that the *Monthly* have been publishing having made a hit. Just drop a line to Miss Ainslee, Travers, and say that we've arranged to bring them out in book form for the holiday trade, and that Loring will draw new pictures; and explain about the royalties, you know. Oh, and, Travers, say that we will be glad if she will consent to drop her *nom de plume*, and let the book be published under her own name. Say it's really essential. People are beginning to ask who writes those things."

\* \* \* \* \*

Gertrude Ainslee sat alone in her

room with the publisher's letter in her hand, an intensely agitated girl.

"It's simply too much to think of," she cried. "A book—the summit of all my ambitions! If only I knew what Morris Cleveland will think when he hears of it, and realises that I learned how stories were written through typewriting his. Will he be satisfied when he remembers that I *stopped* typing them, and believe me when I tell him that I began without more than dreaming that I should be successful? Oh! if he isn't, I'll be the most miserable person in the world, and I'll—I'll hate the book!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Morris Cleveland, bored, laid his cigar aside, and, picking up the last number of a well-known literary review, glanced carelessly over it. On the second page he found this:—

"It seems to have remained for a woman to do that which so many of our younger writers have attempted without success, namely, to tell a short story in the manner of Mr. Maurice Kirk Cleveland. In 'The Glow-worm, and other Fancies,' Miss Gertrude Ainslee has done this. These stories, however, are not copies. The treatment alone suggests Cleveland, for there is a world of originality in Miss Ainslee's book, and there is also a feminine insight which proves quite delightful, and which Cleveland's stories have, of course, lacked. Her 'Glow-worm,' particularly, will rank, both in plot and treatment, with anything that Cleveland has done."

Cleveland put down the review and gave vent to a long, low whistle. Then, after a moment's thought, he rose and exchanged his smoking jacket for a frock coat. Stepping to a mirror, he adjusted his tie and smiled happily at his reflection in the glass.

"It's simply another case," he said, as he reached for his hat and stick, "of the clever apprentice's learning all the trade secrets, and, eventually, being offered a partnership!"



A COSSACK OF THE DON.





GENERAL STAFF OF THE RUSSIAN ARMY.

## THE ORGANISATION OF THE RUSSIAN ARMY

By LIEUT. W. C. RIVERS

**I**N Russia, as in most European states, a standing army is maintained as large in numbers as the resources of the country will admit.

The general obligation for military service in Russia extends to all able-bodied men when they become twenty-one years of age, and continues until they are forty-three; and although the Russian peace army is greater than that maintained by any other state, the number of men annually required is obtained with less difficulty than that experienced by other European states. About eight hundred and seventy thousand men reach the age of twenty-one every year; of these about two hundred and eighty-seven thousand are needed for the active army and the fleet.

A low estimate of the Russian active army in peace puts the number of officers

at thirty-six thousand, and the rank and file at eight hundred and sixty thousand. In war it is calculated that sixty-three thousand officers would be required and that there would be available three million four hundred and forty thousand trained soldiers for the ranks. These figures alone give an idea of the enormous responsibility of the officers charged with the management and training of the Russian army.

Aside from the management of what in other countries would be considered purely army matters, in Russia many other important administrative affairs are connected with the army, where it has a part in the interior government of vast portions of the country, and in the construction of great lines of railway.

The army, in war time, would consist of the Field Troops, Reserve Troops,



## THE IDLER

Depôt Troops, Fortress Troops, Local Troops, and the Imperial Militia.

The Field Troops, destined for active offensive operations, are composed of the standing peace army brought up to war strength by the addition of trained men from the reserve.

Next are the Reserve Troops, for home defence, but primarily to supply the constant demand for new men to fill the gaps in the Field Troops. The units of the Reserve Troops are maintained in time of peace in small numbers.

Depôt Troops are designed primarily to supply trained men to fill gaps in the field army, and are formed by detaching units from the active peace army, and adding to them from the reserves, or from the citizens who may not have been previously drafted into the forces.

Fortress Troops are intended, as the name indicates, for defensive purposes, and are kept up as a part of the active army, but the number would be increased in war by the addition of men from the reserve, as in the other cases.

Local Troops are used for local pur-

poses of police and defence in particular portions of the empire.

The Imperial Militia—called out only by Imperial edict in a time of great emergency—would consist of the remaining able-bodied men capable of bearing arms. They are intended for home defence and to supply men to fill the gaps in the active forces.

All citizens, on becoming twenty-one years of age, are liable for service, though only about thirty per cent. of the men liable actually do enter for service with the colours. The term of active service with the colours is four years, after which the soldier passes from the standing army into the reserve. He remains for four teen years in the service, being called out each year for a short period of training.

The number of exemptions from service in the standing army in Russia for family reasons is very large. Men who are physically unfit are excused. Clergymen, doctors, and teachers are also exempt, and some classes of persons may complete their active service in one year



FIELD TELEGRAPH CORPS.



A COMPANY OF SAPPERS AT WORK.

The Cossacks serve under special laws. They are liable for service from eighteen to thirty-eight years of age. The first three years they are not actually in service, but are in the preparatory category. For four years they serve in the standing army, most of them as cavalry. For the next four years they are allowed to go on furlough, but must keep their arms and horses ready for instant use if called out. For another four-year period they are also on furlough, but must keep in readiness their arms and equipment only. Then they pass into the reserves, and are liable to be called out only in case of war.

The standing army is organised into twenty-nine army corps—the highest strategical unit in all armies.

For purposes of administration the

country is divided into thirteen geographical districts, some of which have more than one army corps in them. The commander of the district reports to the War Minister, and commands all the troops in his military district.

The Guard Corps, the troops in Finland, and some of the Cossacks and troops in the Caucasus, have particular and special organisations, but the great mass of the regular army is organised in the same way.

All the corps contain two infantry divisions, and most of them besides a cavalry division of regular or Cossack cavalry.

The division consists, in the infantry, habitually of two brigades of two regiments each. A regiment has four battalions of four companies each, or sixteen companies.



The peace strength of an infantry regiment is seventy officers and one thousand eight hundred and sixteen men; the war strength, seventy-nine officers and three thousand eight hundred and seventy-four combatant men.

All the army corps have artillery and engineer corps attached to them, the latter embracing a company of sappers, a telegraph company, a company of field

mense parks are maintained for the supply of the artillery in time of war. There are also forty-two reserve field batteries, which in war would expand into one hundred and sixty-four.

The cavalry is organised into divisions, which usually have each three brigades of regular and one brigade of Cossack cavalry. There are four divisions of purely Cossack cavalry.



OFFICERS OF THE HORSE GUARDS.

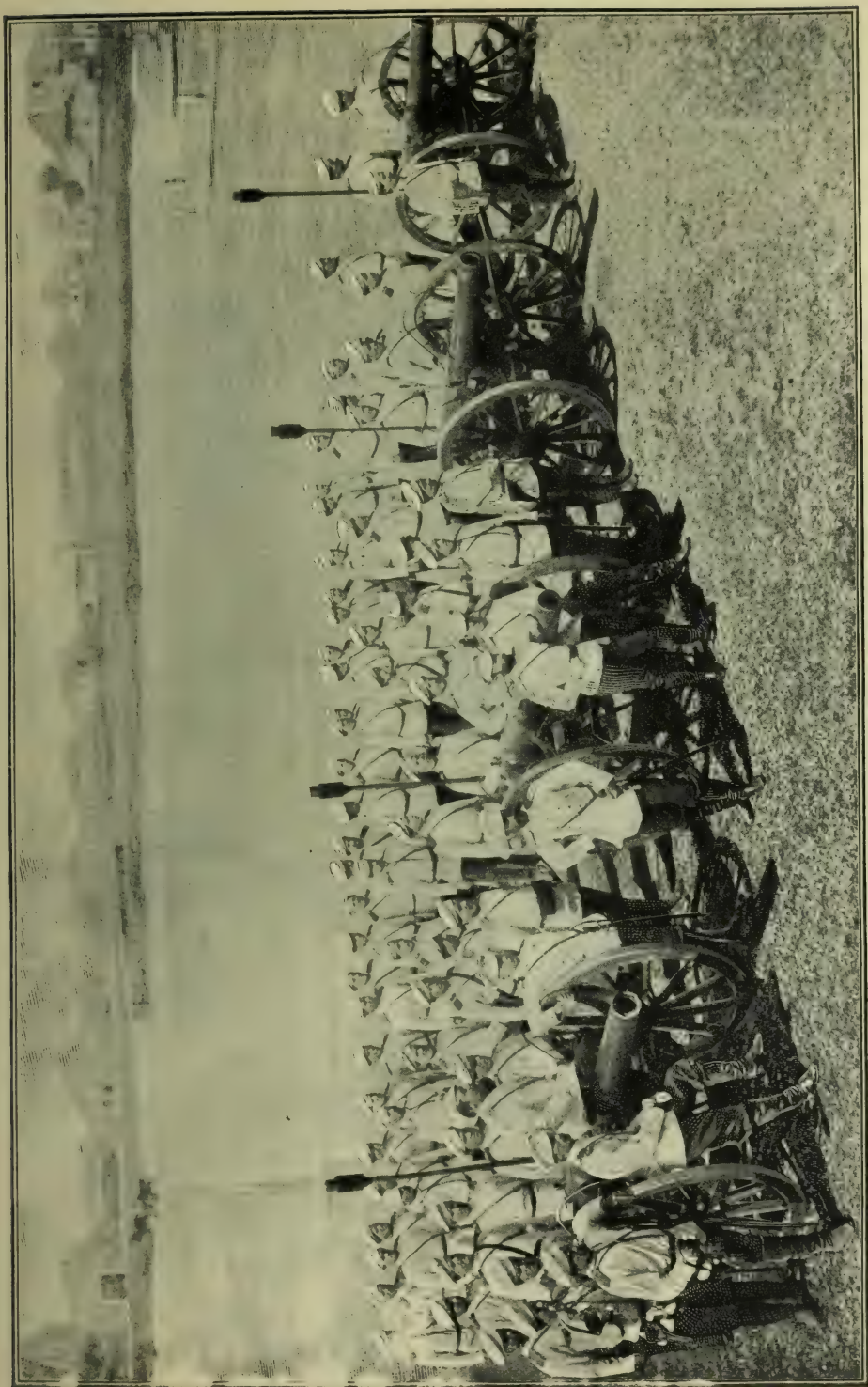
engineers, half of a pontoon battalion, and a train battalion.

The field artillery is composed of four hundred and fourteen batteries—ninety-eight heavy field batteries with the remainder light batteries and mountain batteries, all possessing four guns in peace and eight in war. Besides, there are twenty-three horse batteries of the line, and twenty-four howitzer batteries of six guns each in peace or war. Im-

The prevailing colour of the Russian army uniform is dark green for blouse, trousers, and cap. White linen uniforms are worn in hot weather.

The full-dress uniform of some of the regiments of the Guard is much decorated, but the army field uniform as a whole is plain and simple. Infantry as well as cavalry wear a top-boot, the ordinary shoe being unsuitable for the muddy roads of the country.





THIRTY-FIRST ARTILLERY REGIMENT AT DRILL.

The cap has round it a band which corresponds in colour to the colour of the shoulder-pieces.

The number of a soldier's regiment is on his cap; the number of the division to which his regiment belongs is on the shoulder-pieces. The position of the regiment in the division and the brigade of which it is a part, is indicated by the colour of the shoulder-pieces.

The overcoat is greyish-brown, and is very heavy, reaching below the knees. In winter, in addition, sheepskin coats are issued for wear under the overcoat. A camel's hair cloth hood is issued with the overcoat.

The Cossack coat is a double-breasted long frock-coat, with the outer flap cut diagonally across from the throat to the hip.

Some of the Cossacks wear a black sheepskin busby instead of a cap.

The rank of the officers is indicated by the number and position of stars on the shoulder-pieces, and by the position and colour of the lace on the strap and on the collar.

The uniform in the cavalry is generally the same as that in the infantry,

but in the Guard regiments there are many variations in trimmings and in ornamentation.

The Russian cavalry is armed with a rifle and bayonet as well as a sabre.

Revolvers or lances are not carried by the cavalry soldiers, but the non-commissioned officers have the former, and the lance is carried by certain regiments in peace only.

The field uniform of General Staff officers is a dark green frock-coat and cap, with the band of the cap and the coat-collar of black velvet. The trousers are a greyish-blue, with red piping.

While the word "staff," used as a military term, has a changing and different signification, depending upon the country or army with reference to which it is employed, it has a generally similar meaning in all armies.

People not familiar with technical military terms, in reading of the "staff" of a particular general or command, have a vague idea that the persons so designated are, in some way, assistants to a commander, but the many variations in the use of the term are often not clear to them.



GROUP OF SCOLITZ INFANTRY.





ROYAL GUARDS.

The backbone of an army is the fighting force—the troops of cavalry, artillery, or infantry, which, with the officers immediately serving with them, are designated the “line” of an army. The actual execution on the field of battle of the instructions or plans of a general might possibly be carried out—in imagination, at least—by the troops of

the line and the general without the intervention of others.

Two general considerations, however, require the intervention of a third set of men between the commander and the troops. One is the necessity of having officers for immediately assisting the commander in his duties on the field—connecting him, as it were, with the



## THE IDLER

officers of the line. Such duties on the field of battle would be to record and convey the orders of the commander ; to procure for him accurate information as to the state of the combat, the position of his own troops or of the enemy ; and at times to represent him on distant parts of the field, and even to give at

manifold duties involved in thus creating and co-ordinating the different branches and parts of an army, are generally designated as "staff" officers to distinguish them from officers of the line. They belong to no regiment as a rule, and are arranged in separate groups with their distinctive uniform, and are



MOUNTED COSSACK.

critical moments decisions or instructions in his name. The other consideration is connected with the work to be done before troops can be marshalled for battle, in their organisation, equipment, mobilisation, training, and support ; and in the constant maintenance of a body of troops in a state of health and efficiency.

Officers performing the various and

advanced in a different manner from the promotion of the line officers.

The advancement of science has produced a corresponding complication in the military art. The application of steam to transportation by land and by sea has caused a great revolution in the methods of warfare—probably greater than that brought about by anything

else since the invention of gunpowder. The rapidity with which modern military operations may, with the aid of steam and electricity, be carried on, renders the especial preparation beforehand of minute information concerning other countries, as well as the accumulation of stores and munitions, essential.

The duties to be performed by the officers of the staff divide themselves broadly into two groups, which in turn have many subdivisions. These relate, the one to questions of administration, supply or fiscal affairs; the other to questions of strategy and tactics, to which naturally are joined matters connected with the preparation and digestion of information concerning the resources and forces of possible or actual enemies.

The duties of the first group are generally subdivided among different departments, the names of which often indicate their functions. The performance of the duties of the second group—

those connected with questions of strategy and tactics—involves the utilisation of the labour of the first group, and, to a certain extent, its supervision.

Many of the most wonderful discoveries or inventions of modern science are at once applied to the methods of warfare, and the inevitable drift of such groups of men is that they tend to become highly specialised in their particular branch or work. Indeed, specialisation has been the cry of the age, and it is natural that a body of men working earnestly along certain lines should come unconsciously to regard that particular part of the work entrusted to them as most important.

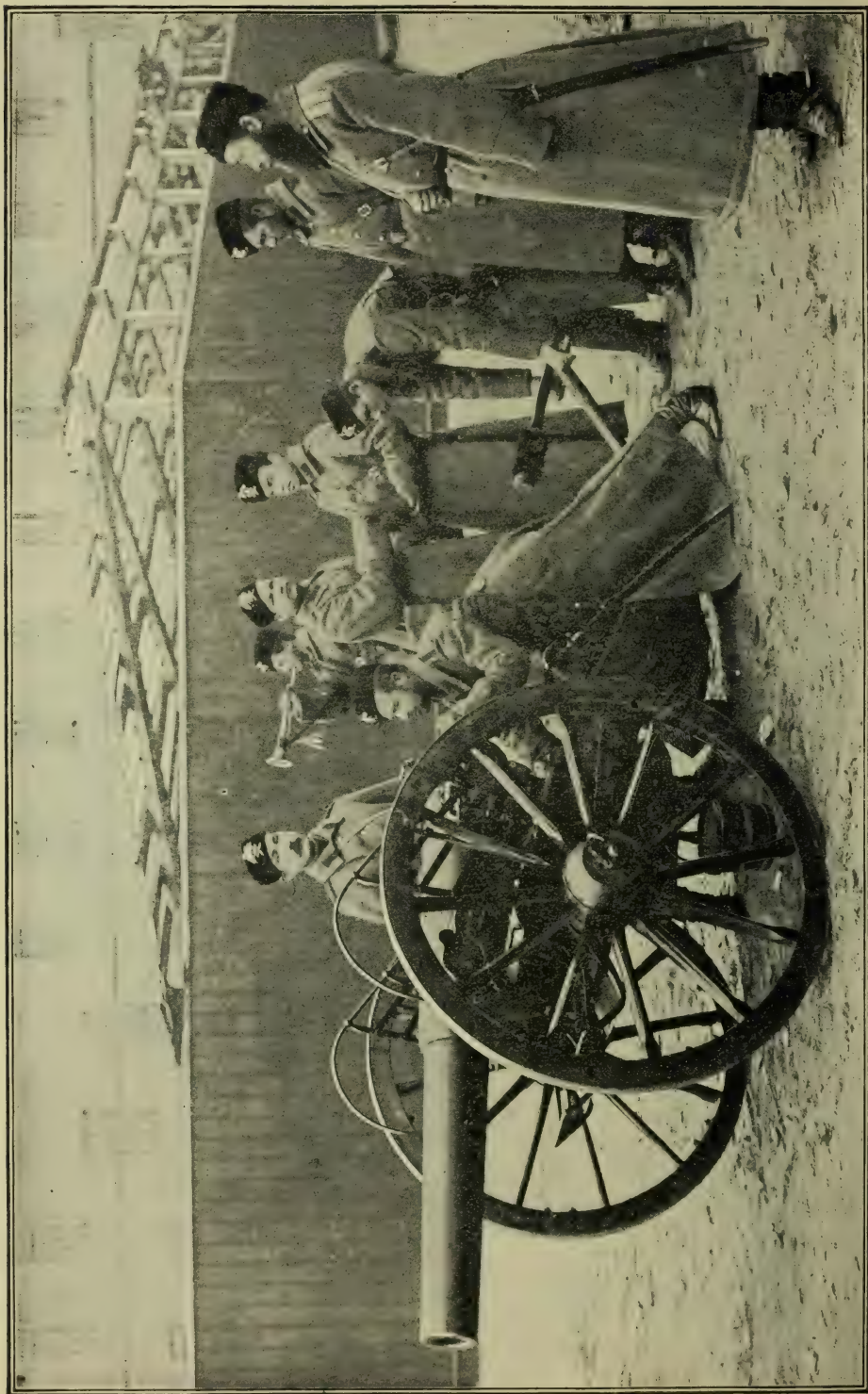
Specialists are invaluable, and without them the modern armies could not have been brought to their present stage of equipment and organisation.

The same tendency to become completely absorbed in the work of their own particular branch is observable in



CORPS OF RAILWAY ENGINEERS.





ARTILLERY GUN PRACTICE.





BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION BY A REGIMENT OF SAPPERS.

officers of the line as military matters become more complicated.

As a protest against the evils of over-specialisation in the different departments of modern armies, in recent years there has been developed what is called a "General Staff," or a staff over all the staff, as it were.

The idea of a General Staff is to secure as assistants to generals in the higher commands of an army, a body of officers familiar with the duties of all arms of the service, and with the work of all the different staff or supply departments; men whose wits have been sharpened by higher education in military science than is necessary or obtainable for the average officer, and whose judgment has been broadened and formed by wide experience in very different lines of work. Such men have been found absolutely essential to the harmonious working of the different parts of an army. They need not be highly developed specialists in any branch or department, but must be well informed about all.

Indeed, the requirements for a competent General Staff officer, as the term is understood in modern European armies, are such that one is tempted to ask: "Where do the functions of the general come in? He has been given such a corps of accomplished assistants that his labours must be reduced to near nothing, and his powers cut off correspondingly." In fact, the personal and romantic rôle of the general has been sadly minimised by modern conditions; but if he no longer dashes about in fascinating style, his responsibility and his power are largely increased.

While war in the end is much the same as ever, and the personal element of commander and men can never be eliminated, still the tendency is distinctly toward long and careful preparation beforehand, with the most minute calculation of possibilities and probabilities, which make it much more a science than formerly. It is inevitable that a general should be more dependent upon his advisers and assistants under these conditions, and that the education and pre-

paration of the latter are therefore matters of the highest importance.

The General Staff of a modern European army is often called a nursery for generals, most of whom have been trained by long service in various important staff duties.

In Russia the Czar is the absolute head of the government, and of the army, which he controls through the Minister of War. The War Minister carries out the decrees of the Emperor through the generals and the General Staff. A high officer of the General Staff is assigned to each military district as Chief of Staff to the general in command, and has supervision over all the staff and all the supply departments of the district. He has as his assistants, for the collection and preparation of information and for making inspections, other officers of the General Staff.

Each unit of the army, from a division up, has similarly one or more officers of the General Staff assigned to its head-

quarters. Supervisory control of the whole *personnel* of the General Staff is exercised by the Chief of the General Staff at the War Office, who recommends the officers for assignment and promotion.

As in all modern European armies, the officers of the General Staff are specially selected by the army authorities themselves, and are further educated for their important work. Officers of any arm of the service who have served with their regiments not less than three years, are allowed to try the entrance examinations for the Nicholas Academy of the Staff.

The course of the Nicholas Academy is for two and one-half years, with a supplementary course. The officers, on passing from the Academy, are divided into three groups. Those who are in the two higher groups are given a medal as a decoration, and are almost all nominated for employment in the General Staff. Those of the third class



KOPINSKY COSSACKS.

generally return to their regimental duty with the benefit of the further education, but with little chance for staff service.

The wise principle is adhered to of requiring those who go into the General Staff to serve before each promotion, a tour of regimental duty, in order that they may constantly keep themselves informed of the feelings and needs of the troops.

\* \* \* \* \*

Notwithstanding the great strength of the Russian Army, yet, on account of the extent of the territory and frontier, it is perhaps not so large for its uses as

the smaller armies of some European states.

And on account of the prodigious expenditure required to re-arm and to re-equip the army with new inventions, it is supposed that the equipment is possibly not all kept up-to-date so closely as that of some other armies.

But, nevertheless, the Russian army forms a most powerful engine, and with the well-known qualities of the race it is confidently to be expected that it will give a good account of itself in any European conflict, though its present field of employment seems likely to be the far East.

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## THE HUMORIST AT HOME

By E. M. DINNIS

BABY dares n't cry out hard,  
Sister dares n't sing;  
Fido's kep' out in the yard,  
Tied up tight wiv string.  
Movver dares n't tell him when  
Butcher wants his money,  
When dear Farver's in his den  
Writin' something funny.

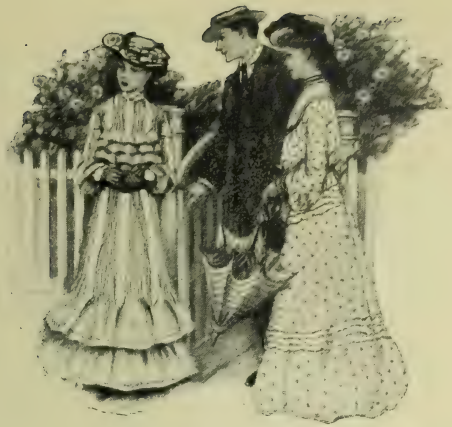
No one talks at dinner-time,  
No one dares to laugh;  
No one calls the dumplings prime,  
And begs another half—  
Everybody's sad and cowed,  
Even grown-up folks,  
No one dares to smile out loud  
When Farver's thinkin' jokes.

No one dares to play a game  
'Cos of makin' noise;  
Sittin' quiet's awful tame,  
Specially fur boys.  
Everything's as slow as snails,  
Everybody's solemn,  
When Farver makes the funny tales  
To fill the comic column.





"WHAT A BEAUTIFUL WORLD!" SIGHED MISS PRIMROSE, AMONG HER PETUNIAS."



## MISS PRIMROSE

By ROY ROLFE GILSON

*Illustrated by Anna Whelan Betts*

"POOR Miss Primrose!" they used to say, smiling behind her back—a flat, rectangular little back, unbending, old-fashioned—"Poor Miss Primrose!"

"But really, now, she's awfully good-hearted."

"Good-hearted, yes; but, oh, dear—"

"Well, the Lord, He made her, Mrs. Halloway."

"Yes, I know."

"And she can't help being a little queer, you know, Mrs. Halloway."

"No, of course not, Mrs. Page."

And with such innocent blasphemy did they fix the responsibility where it belonged—those two gossips at a church sociable.

"Who *is* the little old maid over there quoting poetry, Mrs. Halloway?"

"Why don't you know? We were just talking of her.—That's Miss Primrose, Mr. Dapper. Quite a catch. I'm surprised you men should be so shy. But, really, now, I ought not to talk that way. I was only joking. She's one of the best-hearted——"

Mr. Dapper smiled. Mrs. Halloway

smiled. Mrs. Page smiled. Miss Primrose, turning suddenly, caught the radiance. Her eyes lighted. She smiled and nodded at Mrs. Halloway; nodded and smiled at Mrs. Page; dropped her eyes before Mr. Dapper's good-humoured gaze. What a loving world it was, to be sure! she told herself. Ever since she could remember—never mind how many years that was—the world had smiled at her. She had smiled back. She had tried always to show her gratitude.

"People are so lovely," she said.

If no one had sought her hand before it withered, it was not her fault. Had she not always a pretty way with those left fingers, before the veins showed through—a way of putting back stray curls, carelessly, but long enough to show no ring was there? If her cheeks were soft for no one, she guarded them no less watchfully. Had she not always on the walnut bureau upstairs a little white jar? Before its store more than one wrinkle, trespassing, had turned and fled. Was not her grey gown spotless? Was not every pin of it in place? Was



it not, moreover, a sensible sort of gown, such as men approve of—short-skirted that it might not sweep the dust? Did it not fit perfectly (ah, dear Miss Primrose, too, too perfectly!) without a dishonest pad in all the length and breadth of it? Was it not becoming, the dash of ribbon there beneath the chin?

If men were shy it was not her voice they shrank from. Dear, how she had laboured over it! The Lord had created her, yes, as Mrs. Page had said—but she had improved the voice He gave. She had taken elocution lessons. She had moulded it anew. She had taught her tongue a new precision, her accents new, melodious cadences. That was long ago, but she could still t-t-twitter like a little bird. She could still recite a little—tremolo, piano, then pianissimo—out of the goodness of her heart, for the missionary funds. Her selections were those grave and dirge-like verses, those passionate laments—the poetry of her youth. But when she crooned wistfully over other women's babies, ah! then her voice was the one the Lord had given her. Women do not need elocution lessons for that.

No, it was not Miss Primrose's fault she had smiled alone all these years. She had tried—everything. She had not thrown herself at any man's feet. No, no; she was too modest for that. But she had tried honestly to make herself the kind of woman men, she supposed, would like. She had questioned the women's columns. She had traced her queries in a disguised hand. She had signed them *Snow Drop*. No one had ever guessed. So she had learned many things—the etiquette of betrothals, not to accept rich presents from men, what a bride should wear.

Other things she had learned, matters more practical—how to make . . . yes, out of handkerchiefs—the prettiest things you ever saw! And how one should walk on the balls of the feet, you know, not on one's heels. A little difficult, yes, at first, but it lent Miss

Primrose such a billowy gait. Many persons had observed it, she knew; commented, smiled—approvingly—for, mark you, is not a smile always a smile?

She read poetry—beautiful, beautiful things, about Love and Moonlight and Violets.

"Oh, don't you love the poets?" she would ask young men, with just that little needful rhapsody in the upper voice. And then, more passionately, *sotto voce* :—

"Oh, if I could only write it. I've always wanted to, but I've never seemed to get the time somehow. My father wrote verses—lovely verses. I have them all in a scrap book at home, upstairs."

"Absurd, Miss Primrose!" laughed the whole little world.

"What a beautiful world!" sighed Miss Primrose, among her petunias.

Yet that same verse-making father, widower and helpless invalid for thirty years, day by day Miss Primrose had tended lovingly, without a murmur—till he had gone. On the day she buried him, home again from the cemetery with its cold, white stones and its dreadful pines moaning in the March wind—home again by her little sputtering fire, she rocked and cried and wished him back again. To him alone of all this world was she necessary. Whom was there left for her to love and tend? And grieving so Miss Primrose knew at last in her loneliness as she had never realised in all her long, long sacrifice, that while she was serving him whom she had laid away, while she was bringing his gruel, sharpening his pencils, shedding tears over his poor verses and putting them away, one by one, in that family scrap book upstairs, her hour had fled; the flower of her youth had slowly withered; her own poem—the poem in every woman's heart—was still unwritten and unread. Yet, perhaps—perhaps after all, it was not too late.

Her heart still warmed to things. Even the world had spoken of that



"SHE ROCKED AND CRIED AND WISHED HIM BACK AGAIN."

heart; had called it a good heart, for those pitiful, misguided ways of hers could not hide its gleaming. Because no one had ever sounded it, there could not, of course, be depths among its shallows! At least, there was no romance there that anyone knew of. There was no suspicious locket, no strange portraits in Miss Primrose's lonely little house, no tell-tale minia-

tures on the walnut bureau. As far as anybody knew, there was no special day set apart for melancholy in her calendar. No matter when, no matter how they found her, she was always smiling. And is not a smile—always—a smile?

II.

"Why don't you get married?" grunted Captain Blair, veteran, pensioned



and privileged. "Nice little woman like you, ma'am, ought to have a husband and six children at your time of life. Yes, ma'am, six children—or seven."

Miss Primrose was scarlet.

"Why," she gasped afterward to Mrs. Holloway; "why, the idea of a man talking to me like that! He ought to be ashamed of himself, the old—*roué*!"

"But the Captain meant well, Miss Primrose. And now that we're on the subject, why don't you get married? That is, why don't you encourage the men a little more? There's Mr. Dobbin——"

"Mr. Dobbin!"

"Well, then, Doctor Burr."

"Horrors!"

"Well, Squire Seward, then. He's lots of money."

"*That* old skinflint!"

"Surely you couldn't have any objection to Mr. Jones?"

Miss Primrose, it should be observed, made no comment on Mr. Jones.

"Mrs. Holloway," she said, "I have never asked anybody in this world to love me. I have my own little house, and my books, and my petunias to tend, and my tame canary, and my cats."

She paused. An odd little smile flitted across her face.

"And as for a man, Mrs. Holloway, I would never think for a moment of bringing a wild animal among my pets."

"Poor Miss Primrose!" sighed Mrs. Holloway afterwards. "What a pity it is no man has ever had eyes enough to see what a dear, good soul lives in that funny little body."

"She doesn't live near enough to a blind asylum," grumbled Mr. Holloway. He was one of those men who will have their little fling.

"Oh, Jim, that's heartless of you!"

"Well, if you were a man, Mrs. Holloway, would you choose Miss Primrose for a wife?"

"Well, perhaps I wouldn't. But some other man might, I should think. She

is a little affected, but she has a rather handsome face. She must have been very pretty in her day. Besides, she wears those short skirts you men are always preaching about."

"Bah!" said Mr. Holloway.

"She says, though, she wouldn't have a man about."

"Try her!" said Mr. Holloway.

"Well, I feel sorry for her, Jim."

"So do I."

"Don't be heartless, Jim."

"I'm not. It's a shame somebody hasn't given her a pointer or two. It would be a little cruel at first, but she might stop *trying* so hard—walking like a dromedary, and talking like an amateur nightingale—and just be a nice, quiet sort of a little woman. When a man acts like an ass, other men make it pretty evident to him that they think him one—and if there's any real stuff in him, it sprouts. And if there isn't—why, he just goes and herds with the other asses. But when a woman puts on airs and makes a fool of herself, you other women laugh about her behind her back, then smile and sympathise with her to her face. How is she ever to learn she's on the wrong track? Now, I'll bet Miss Primrose thinks herself popular, and just a little bit more cultured than the rest of you."

"I wouldn't say that, Jim."

"Well, I would."

Mrs. Holloway sighed.

"It's too late to mend now," she said. "Miss Primrose isn't young any more, you know."

Mr. Holloway to the contrary notwithstanding, there had been one frank woman in Ourtown—a newcomer labouring under a delusion.

"Old maids are such silly creatures, Mrs. Primrose," confided the newcomer.

"Oh——"

Miss Primrose's face flushed.

"Oh," she managed to say, but faintly. "Do you think so?"

"They're always so coquettish, Mrs. Primrose."



"THERE, HE ALMOST LAUGHED."

"Why—why, I don't know. I've known some very nice spinsters."

"Oh, there are a few nice ones, I daresay, but as a rule, I mean. Still, poor things, they feel so neglected no doubt, they can't be blamed, Mrs. Primrose."

"But I am *not* Mrs. Primrose. You have been misinformed. I am Miss Primrose."

And there were foolish tears in Miss Primrose's eyes.

Would people never leave that subject alone? Were there then no other things in the world to talk about—no beautiful flowers without thorns? Why even Conrad, the little boy next door—even dear little Conrad had said to her:—

"I don't think old maids like little boys."

"Oh, Conrad!"

"Well, they never seem to have any. If I was an old maid——"

"Hush, Conrad. What do you know about such things—a little boy like you. Besides, it isn't pretty to call a woman

an Old Maid. You should say Spinster."

"Papa doesn't. If I was an old maid——"

"Here's a peppermint," said Miss Primrose, diving into the pocket of her skirt. "Do you like peppermints?"

"I just love 'em."

"Then here," said Miss Primrose, bringing forth the most beautiful red-striped ones. "Take two—take three."

Conrad stuffed three into his mouth.

"Nice, aren't they?" inquired Miss Primrose.

"Yeh-uss," gurgled Conrad. "I like peppermints best of all, next to chocolates. I wouldn't mind being *your* little boy."

Whereupon, suddenly, Miss Primrose—Oh, it was behind the lattice, and Conrad was only a child. Miss Primrose's face was sticky with peppermint, but she did not appear to mind. Conrad came often after that, through a hole in the fence, and Miss Primrose's peppermint bill was doubled.



III.

Conrad's sister was fifteen. She, too, came through the gap in the fence, but not for peppermints. She had made a discovery, it seems.

"Oh, Auntie Primrose," she said one day confidently, "love is such a wonderful, wonderful thing! It makes everything so — different somehow. Even Monday isn't blue any more."

"Isn't it?"

"Why, Auntie, just the common, every-day things are beautiful when you love a person. You don't even care if you haven't all the dresses you want."

"That's the practical side of it," said Miss Primrose.

"And you like good things so much better, Auntie—poetry, and music, and flowers, and fine days, and your little brother—oh, it's wonderful, love is!"

"So it is," said Miss Primrose. She was drinking in every word. She was looking straight into that young girl's eyes. Her face was radiant. Her voice was the one the Lord had given her.

"Oh, Auntie, it does one so much good to talk to you. You always understand. You never laugh at me. I suppose it's because you remember how it all was when you were a girl like me."

"Yes," said Miss Primrose. "I remember."

"Auntie Primrose, *you* must have been in love yourself once!"

"Only once?" asked Miss Primrose.

"Oh, you know what I mean—once upon a time. Oh, I'm *sure* you were, Auntie Primrose. You remember everything so well."

"Yes," said Miss Primrose, softly, "I remember—everything—so well."

Her smile was lovely to look upon. There was a haze as of distance in her eyes. She was there with the young girl—but she was not there. There is a road which it takes years to travel; yet but a moment suffices to retrace one's steps.

"Yes, I remember," Miss Primrose

said, and went back down that lonely way. Straight and narrow it was; monotonous, save for certain toilsome hills; no fork, no crossway, no choosing. Barren it was, as she saw it now, with scarcely a cool, green shadow. The dust of it choked her. The sky above it was a glowering grey. But now and then the thorny, life-long hedges that had shut her in blossomed again and lent a fragrance to her pilgrimage. The road grew sweeter. Birds sang—and winds—and brooks. The sun was warm. The sky was blue. It was spring again. And journeying so, Miss Primrose came to where she was a girl.

"My dear," she cried, hurrying back again to where she sat with that other girl—"my dear," stopping but long enough to catch breath—"just be a little girl as long as ever you can, dear, and play, and play, and love, oh—*everything!*"

IV.

A new little baby, lying in his mother's arms, looked solemnly up into another woman's face. Miss Primrose beamed upon him—recited a little verse for him—touched his cheek.

"It's velvet, isn't it?" she said. "Does he smile yet?"

"Oh, yes, now and then."

"What time of day does it—does he smile usually?"

"In the mornings mostly."

"I must come over some morning," mused Miss Primrose, absently. She edged nearer.

"Shan't I—shan't I hold him for you?"

"Oh, no, thank you."

"But you must be tired?"

"Oh, no, not at all."

"But I haven't a thing to do, you know," said Miss Primrose. "I'd just as soon take him for a while. You mustn't let him tire you, you know."

"He doesn't tire me a bit—do you, darling?"

"Well, I thought," said Miss Primrose, "if there was anything else you'd like to be doing, you know, I'd——"

"Oh, no. My work is all done. Isn't he booful?"

"Isn't he!" Miss Primrose agreed. "Would him like to come to his Auntie Primrose? Would him? I believe him would."

There was a silence.

"Now, don't ever be afraid to ask me to tend him for you, if you want to go calling or anything," said Miss Primrose. "I can just as well come as not. *There,*

he almost smiled! You darling! Oh, I think—I think little babies are the sweetest—don't you remember where the—where the poet——"

Miss Primrose smiled a queer, wry, little smile.

"Where the poet——" she tried again, but turned away.

She passed swiftly down the garden path and was gone.

"Poor Miss Primrose!" laughed the whole little world about her.

"What a beautiful world!" sighed Miss Primrose, among her petunias.

## THE WIND I LOVE

By SYDNEY HESSELRIGGE

OH! brave North wind, I laugh to feel  
Your mad embrace, your grip of steel!  
Far from you have my lines been cast,  
But now I'm home again at last,  
In England!

The South wind, she is soft and fair,  
And sunshine with her brings.  
The West wind, trailing sea-damp hair,  
In clouds behind her, sings  
Sweet ocean-music, sad and rare,  
But I love best your rollickings,  
In England!

The East wind is both keen and strong,  
His breath is sharp and icy-cold;  
But oh! North wind, I've loved you long!  
'Neath foreign skies my heart did ache  
To hear your kingly music wake  
And fill the air, your kisses bold  
To feel, to hear your grand voice break  
O'er all the land. Glad mem'ries throng  
Upon me when your giant song  
Swells forth. I love you, for you hold  
Me fast enthralled. I pray you take  
My heart—you, whom I loved of old,  
In England!





“‘THEY SAY THE PIT IS HAUNTED,’ SHE SAID, IN A TERRIFIED WHISPER, ‘AND THAT THEY’LL NEVER GO BACK.’”



## THE UNDER-SECRETARY AND THE MYSTERY

By JOSEPH KEATING

“AND Lord Glyncynon will be ruined.”

A man's brains always plays with the uppermost thought, and the Under-Secretary of State, in a murmur, repeated many times the other man's words, long after the speaker with his colleagues had left him to himself in his office. More, much more, the trio of visitors had said; things of greater importance—to them; but this half-dozen words, merely spoken incidentally, seemed alone of importance to the Under-Secretary; for his interest in Lord Glyncynon's well-being transcended departmental things. The cares of state never could interest him so much as the cares of people. This young Mr. Hervey might perhaps owe his success to ability: he certainly owed it to amiability. And his beardless, well-cut clever face, his fine tall figure and smart clothes, his monocle and manner, had made it a proverb among the women that he would one day become a great statesman. But, notwithstanding the good opinion of bad

judges, Hervey's solid qualities went on building up a firm reputation for him amongst men. All his life he had worked hard; and only began his official career after a severe training in the drudgery of Inspectorship of Industries.

He leaned over his table, just now littered with plans of collieries and boundary tracings. His eyes played with the lines; but his brain played with the words: “And Lord Glyncynon will be ruined.”

Then came an interruption. After a slight tap at the door, a white-bearded gentleman came in. He looked old enough and well-groomed enough to pass for the father of the youthful Under-Secretary. In reality he received a steady substantial stipend as the Under-Secretary's subordinate.

“I say,” said the white-bearded man, with a smile (because he knew nothing of the intense mood of his superior); “you are in for things this afternoon.”

“What is it now?” asked Hervey, wearily dropping his eyeglass.

“I said you were quite full up with



that mystery business. But they insisted——”

“Who, who?”

“Why, Lord Glyncynon’s daughter, the Hon’ble Miss Molly Pryce, with her——”

The Under-Secretary leaped from his chair. He started towards the door. A second impulse made him stop short. He looked back, saying quickly with real anxiety:—

“With her father?”

“Why, no; her young brother, Harry.”

“Ah!”

The gratification in the sound made the white-bearded gentleman look surprised. But his superior did not wait to explain. And the subordinate saw that he had made an error of judgment in treating the affair so indifferently. For the Under-Secretary flew out of the room to fetch in the visitors himself.

“And that,” said the elderly junior, regretfully, “means more than I could, officially, have been expected to know.”

He looked at the plans at the table.

“Lord Glyncynon’s colliery,” said he, noting the title. “And Lord Glyncynon’s daughter,” he added, looking through the doorway. “I wonder what the deuce——?”

He stopped and quickly walked away, bowing ceremoniously to a beautiful girl who almost collided with him in her eagerness, as she entered the room.

Her perturbation showed itself in the sweep and rustle of her skirts as she sailed across the floor of the chamber. She looked undoubtedly beautiful. She wore a sort of dark red travelling dress. But her attire had all that flutter of dainty colour and taste with which the cultured feminine touch so hopelessly bewilders and charms the masculine eye. She looked superlatively beautiful in the total effect. Her dark noble face would make a man wish to give his life for her, at least twice a day. Her big pleading eyes threw a charm over all her motions. She flung herself into the chair at the table, and her pose became

the perfection of unstudied grace. And at that moment the weak London sunlight struggled to filter through the window at her right. It cast a radiant gleam upon her. She took up the plans from the table eagerly.

Following her closely, as she entered, came Hervey, and behind him came a youth—the Hon. Harry Pryce—short, and clothed in light tweeds, an effective contrast for the tall, black frock-coated figure of the Under-Secretary.

Hervey’s eyes followed every motion of hers, every look of her lovely eyes. Then he would look around at her young brother. And no one could doubt that one of the two he wished far away and the other—ah!

Before either of the men could find a seat, the Hon’ble Miss Molly threw down the plans and claimed their full attention.

“Tony,” she said, decidedly, to the Under-Secretary, “you must positively run down with us to-night.”

The lady ignored the whole existence of the business of the country for which the Under-Secretary lived and strove.

“My dear Molly,” said he, leaning against the table and looking down at her; “how in the world can I go all the way down to South Wales at such short notice?”

“You are the only one to put this thing right. You know all about coal and pits and these things. No, don’t sit down, Harry. We are going——”

“Oh, I say,” protested her young brother, arrested in mid-air over a cushioned seat; “can’t I have a little rest? I’ve been sitting in that rotten train for hours. I’m tired.”

Worn out, he dropped into the chair.

“And have you come straight from South Wales to-day?” asked Hervey, astonished.

“This very minute,” replied Molly.

“But you’re tired, my girl. You can’t think of running back all that way to-night.”

Now something of the nature of tears

came up into her big eyes as she looked up at him.

"You don't know how serious this thing is for my father."

"What is it?" he asked earnestly. "The three men—those representatives of the colliers at Glyncynon—told me that not a man of the thousand workmen would enter the pit. That, I know, means a serious check on the regular output. But surely we shall be able to get them to work soon."

"They say the pit is haunted," she said in a terrified whisper, "and that they'll never go back. That means ruin."

He smiled.

"It's a question of boundary," said he.

"Not so much as a question of danger," she put in quickly. "They declare that our old Garth pit boundaries"—she put her dainty forefinger on the plans to fix his eye—"have been falsely traced—that the barrier between the two pits is giving way, and that the cries and lights they have heard and seen so mysteriously in the Glyncynon are sent as warnings not to work—that flood or fire is sure to come, as it came in the old pit next to it after such warnings, and burned two hundred of the workmen to death."

"You know, Hervey, it's a serious business," put in her youthful brother, with an air of responsibility, adding by way of self-support: "I know the particular district where they saw the ghosts. I've been in the pit during the holidays."

"But," said Hervey, "what's become of the Glyncynon manager? Why doesn't he investigate and report to the men?"

"The difficulty is that he did that, and unfortunately his tracings of the old Garth boundaries did not agree with the tracings which you from the Home Office sent down to the men's representatives."

Hervey looked very serious indeed at this.

"Good heavens!" said he, under his breath. "But even then," he added aloud, "can't it be put right in a few days?"

"Ah," she answered; "a few days will spoil everything, Tony. The agent for the Glyncynon made tremendous contracts to supply two or three foreign governments with so much of its coal within the next few weeks. The penalty clauses will bring disaster on my father. We are not superfluously rich, and if the men are afraid to work——! Their managers have failed with them. And you, Tony, with all your knowledge of mines and works, are the only one who can save him."

"Ah, Molly; would he be willing to tolerate me, even in the capacity of benefactor? He has brought disaster on me by keeping you from me all these years. I am not good enough. I have no family—no fortune. I'm only an adventurer—a fly on the political wheel——"

"H'sh!" said she, and she smiled. She looked towards her brother. Fatigue had sent the young man to sleep.

"Your look is mysterious," said Hervey.

Her eyelids drooped over her big eyes.

"What made me rush to you all at once in this case?" asked she, gently. "It was a beautiful fate, Tony, that made you a dreary inspector of mines so long."

"A beautiful fate—to keep you from me perhaps for ever, Molly," he answered, sorrowfully.

She smiled again so charmingly, so reassuringly: only the real thing in the heart could send such a smile to her lips.

"Don't you see," Tony, said she, just putting her white hand upon his; "this is our chance: at one stroke you will save my father; and—and us."

The intimacy of tone, the subtle meaning of "We two—you and me," which she put into the last phrase—ah, she turned the sound of it into a sacred thing.



That ended it. The Under-Secretary abandoned the cares of state to kismet at the bidding of a much more beautiful fate. And within two minutes all three, with the bundle of plans in their midst, sped in a hansom to catch the 6.10 at Paddington.

They dined in the train; and at the great Welsh coal port changed to the valley train, which took them up into the hills. They reached Glyncynon at eleven o'clock that night.

During the journey, Hervey had pored over the plans more eagerly than ever. The workings of the old colliery and the Glyncynon stood clearly before his mind's eye, and he felt sure that he could trace every thread of the cobweb even in the dark.

A group of colliers waited them at the station. The news of such an important visitor had mysteriously gone ahead of the train.

Big dark mountains hemmed in the village. On the left-hand side of the valley some red lights flashed upon a colliery head-gear.

"That's Glyncynon," said Miss Pryce, stepping out of the train to the dim-lit platform. "And on the opposite hill is our house: you can just see the lights through the trees."

A footman approached out of the darkness and put his finger to his hat.

"Oh, the carriage is here," said she to Hervey.

"Then Harry will take you straight home, Molly."

"And you?"

"I must fix this thing to-night."

"To-night?" she repeated, alarmed.

"The best time of all," he answered. "If they know I have gone into the disturbed place in the middle of the night, it will take the edge off their superstitions."

"But you have never been near the place before!" she cried.

Here her brother said quite earnestly:

"Look here, you two. You are

leaving me out of this. I ought to be of some use. I'm as anxious as anyone of you to take a hand in putting matters straight."

"But what can you do, Harry?" asked Hervey.

"Do! You know something about boundaries and I don't. But *I* know the roads down in this pit and *you* don't. Can't you see now where I come in?"

"If you mean——"

"Yes, I do. I'm going down with you to-night," the youth declared emphatically.

"Oh, Harry," cried his sister, putting her hand on his shoulder, "you are splendid!"

"By Jove!" said Hervey. "I shall be glad of a little company. Fighting ghosts at midnight five hundred yards down in the middle of the earth is no joke."

The Hon. Miss Molly shuddered visibly. But without any more talk, Hervey put her into the carriage and promised to send his report to Lord Glyncynon as soon as he got back.

"Let it be a good one," said she, tenderly; "and hereafter we shall send in all reports together."

Under cover of darkness he kissed her, and no one else knew of it.

"I'll pray for you to-night," said she, in a whisper of tenderness.

"Thank you," he answered, and stood looking after the little red lights of the carriage lamps as she drove away into the night.

The miners came around him, examining him curiously.

"Good-night, sir," said a deferential voice.

Hervey peered into the speaker's face. The man wore the rough dress of a colliery official.

"Why, it's Davies!" exclaimed Hervey in a voice of pleasant recognition; and he genially put out his hand, which the other man grasped fervently, "It's a pleasure to see you again.

Davies. What brings you into Glyn Valley?"

"Same as you, sir. I think every colliery overman and manager in all the valleys is here trying to get at the bottom of this Glyn cynon mystery thing. It's haunted right enough."

Hervey, with young Pryce, began to move in the direction of the colliery on the hill side.

"Good-night, sir," said another respectful voice.

Hervey recognised the miners' agent who had headed the deputation at his office that very morning.

"Well, Mr. Griffiths," said Hervey, "you see I'm carrying out my promise to go into the matter thoroughly."

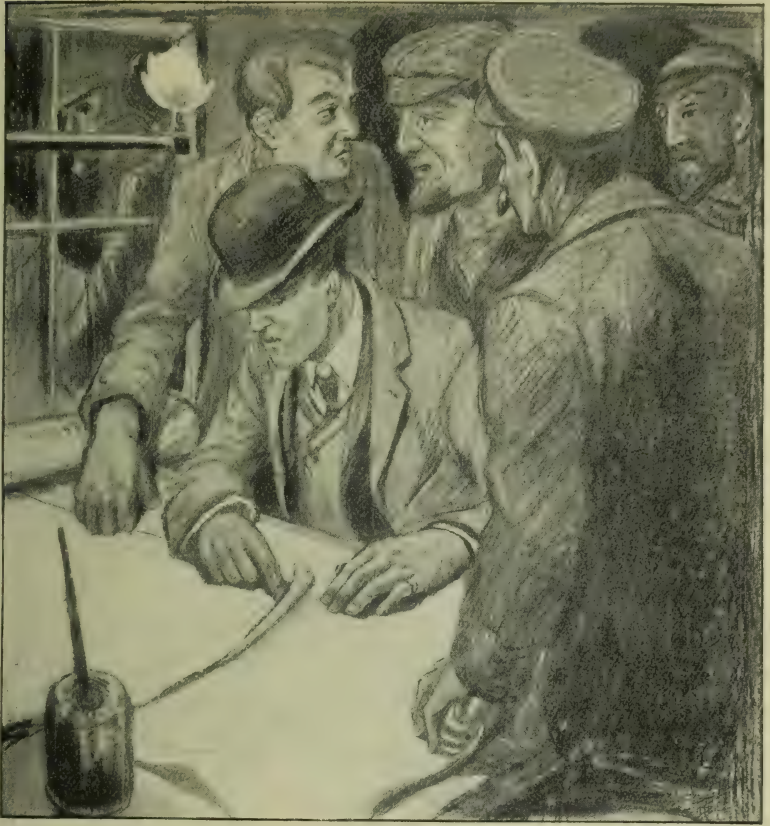
"Thoroughly, sir," answered Griffiths; "why, you are turning it inside out to come all the way down here."

When they reached the offices at the pit-head, Hervey said to one of the men around:—

"Tell Rees, the manager, I want him."

The messenger ran off.

Empty coal trams, loaded coal trams, trams of timber, chains, coils of steel-wire ropes, littered the ground about the pit. High up into the starlight went the shaft head-gear—a black square framework with two enormous wheels at the very top. Flaring gas-lights



‘THE TRACINGS DISAGREE.’

roaring out of burnerless pipe-ends threw grotesque shadows everywhere.

Hervey turned into the pit office and unrolled upon the table the home plans of the collieries and the ones he had brought with him. One dirty-red gas-jet alone lighted the small office. The men who had followed him crowded the place. The bright black eyes, pale cheeks, the rough beards, the short, sturdy stature of the men, proclaimed their nationality and their calling to anyone acquainted with South Wales colliery people. Discipline of any kind became a dead letter amidst the intense excitement under which these men had lived for the past few days.

"The tracings disagree," said the miners' agent. "You see, they don't



show the position of the old workings at the time they were abandoned."

"Unfortunately——" began Hervey, when another member of the deputation—the Glyncynon check-weigher—said:

"The old workings was abandoned because they was full of water."

"Ahy," said Griffiths, "and if the boundaries were worked further than the plans show, the danger is awful for the Glyncynon men."

"How?" demanded Hervey, a little taken aback by all this knowledge.

"Why, there's a pressure of water against the barrier of seventy pounds to the square inch."

"But if the barrier is really forty-seven yards thick?" said Hervey.

"That's where the mistake in the plans comes. The men say the barrier is worked too thin; and there's a swamp of five hundred yards in the Glyncynon, which would be a death-trap for 'em all if the water came through."

"Well," declared Hervey, bent on winning their confidence, "I am going to get at the truth of the matter to-night."

"How, sir?" they asked.

"I am going into the district myself to take measurements."

"What!" they cried, awe-stricken. "You are going into the pit to-night?"

"As soon as I have seen Rees, the manager."

Then their excitement broke all bounds. The mysterious happenings in the pit led them into extravagant protests.

"The men," cried Griffiths, "are afraid to go in because, when the fire broke out in the old Garth pit next to the Glyncynon, they heard the same warnings, and saw the *red dog*. And if the men only took notice of this *arwydd* (sign), *there* would not have been over two hundred of 'em burned in the explosion."

"I remember the explosion," very quietly said Hervey, his face pale.

"There's six of the corpses in the old pit now," put in the check-weigher.

"'Tis they are sending the warnings,"

affirmed another man. "The same as the warnings came before that explosion."

"What warnings? You surely do not believe they were supernatural?"

"'Taint what we believe, sir," returned Griffiths. "It's what the colliers saw. It's a proved fact that, before that explosion, the men in the district where the fire broke out heard in the old black workings the awful shrieks of the *tylwyth teg* (fairies), and saw the lights of the red dog."

"Red dog?"

"It's like a flame; but it's a red dog that runs about old workings down underground to warn the colliers about something that's sure to happen."

"Ahy," put in one of Griffiths' colleagues. "When a man sees the red dog underground he knows it's all up on him, unless he gets out of the pit fast as he can."

"I knew one chap," volunteered the third man, "who saw the red dog just as he was going to start cutting coal—first thing in the morning. He down'd tools and started for home. But he met the fireman, who laughed at him; and the fireman sent his own son to work in the place that day, and before the night that fireman brought his son home in a tram."

The Under-Secretary looked for an explanation.

"He was killed—a fall came on him," said Griffiths. "They put a dead man into a tram, and a horse pulls it out of the workings to the bottom of the shaft."

"He didn't take the *arwydd* (sign)," added his friend. "But the Glyncynon men, when they heard the wailings and warning cries of the *bendith y mamau* (spirit cries: blessings of mothers), they knew it was a warning against flood or fire."

"By Jove!" murmured Hervey to his young friend, Harry Pryce; "these fellows are in earnest."

Young Pryce had turned pale in spite of himself. Just then a man pushed in through the crowd.

"Here's the messenger you sent for the manager," said Harry.

The man looked as terror-stricken as if he himself had seen a ghost.

"The manager went down the pit this evening," he began, "and——"

"Is he killed?" came the cry.

"No; but he's half dead on the top of the pit."

The men rushed from the office to the pit-head. There, leaning against an empty coal tram near the mouth of the pit, they saw Rees, the manager, in a half-fainting condition. A small pit-lamp, still alight, hung from his waist-belt. He had, in his desire to clear up the mystery, undertaken that day to enter the workings alone. Now he had just returned in a state of collapse from terror at what had happened to him down in the dark workings.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated young Pryce at sight of the manager's white face.

"A man came up with me," said Rees, in a rambling manner; "a man got into the carriage *after it started*. He came up with me. He got out on the lower landing *without the carriage stopping for him to get out*."

Terrified silence fell upon the crowd of men. The awe-struck whispers of *drychiolaeth* (apparition) went round.

Hervey came to the manager's side.

"You're safe among friends now," said he, quietly. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, the cries and wailings!" moaned the man.

"The *tylwyth teg* (fairies)," murmured the crowd.

"You won't go down now, sir," said Griffiths to Hervey, rather pleadingly.

"I might as well. Now or any other time will do."

"Let it wait, sir. I tell you it's no joke fighting a ghost five hundred yards down in the darkness under the earth."

Hervey, as he listened, shuddered with an unnameable dread. This weird repetition of his own words—spoken to his young friend not an hour ago—now,

at this moment, sent a thrill of terror through him. It made him understand how the mysterious happenings down below had affected the men around him. He shook himself and answered Griffiths.

"No," said he, "I can't wait. I have very little time to spare. I must finish the business to-night. What do you say, Harry?"

Young Pryce replied with a catch in his voice:—

"I volunteered to join you, Hervey. I can't—I won't go back on that."

"Very well, we'll make a start, Harry."

"*Arglwydd!* (Lord)," exclaimed the miners, gasping at the sight of such venturesome strangers.

But Hervey, after a little preparation—the exchange of coat and hat, for the cap and jacket of his old mining acquaintance, Davies—boarded the pit carriage with Harry, who carried the survey instruments with which Hervey intended to take measurements of the workings leading into the barrier that had caused all the trouble. Each carried—beside plans and chains—a lighted pit-lamp.

The roaring gas-flames threw a red glare upon them in the carriage, as Hervey signed to the banksman his readiness. This workman sent a signal to the winding-enginemán; then the heavy chains at the top of the iron box tightened with a clatter; the carriage rose a little from its resting-place, then slowly dropped into the dark mouth of the pit.

"Wonder if we'll ever see them two again?" cried the men, looking over the gateway down into the shaft.

The hissing of the iron "shoes" against the "guides" as the carriage glided down the shaft, the mysterious element which the midnight hour brings into the air, the strangeness of the situation, and the weird nature of the mission had undoubtedly an uncanny effect upon the two adventurers.

"I shall be really glad," said Hervey



to his companion, "when we've settled the thing."

He spoke in a high-pitched tone in order to make himself heard above the rattle of the chains and rush of the down-going carriage, and his voice sounded like an unnatural shriek, bringing demoniacal echoes out of the darkness.

"By Jove!" answered young Pryce, "it makes my teeth chatter. How these collier chaps can go on day after day and night after night working in these places is a mystery to me."

The carriage stopped, jerked a little, then went down more and more slowly, till it struck the iron rests called fans at the bottom of the pit—deep down in the dark heart of the world, five hundred yards below the reach of any other human beings.

They stepped out of the carriage into the vast blackness. Their two little lamps could only throw a small ring of light around their feet.

"We go west," said Hervey, holding his light to the plan of the colliery in his hand.

The light then threw its rays upon the sidewalls. At the bottom of the shaft a rough mason's arch held up the roof.

"I know the way," said young Pryce. "We have to go back around through a slum on the left-hand side."

He went in front, and turned into a narrow tunnel, which led to the other side of the workings. They came out upon a main road, trams, tram-lines, hauling-ropes, and rollers along the ground.

"We go straight in," said Harry, "for nearly two miles, then turn up a place to the left."

"No—down to the right we must turn, Harry, my boy. It's marked 'Vaughan's Dip' on the map."

"Down, Hervey?"

Once more they consulted the plans. Harry held the light, and Hervey pointed out the particular workings.

"You know it all by heart, Hervey," admiringly said the youth. "By Jove! I'm glad. Now you can take the lead, Hervey."

Both laughed rather nervously at this—the most sepulchral laughter they had ever heard. The dark, hollow, endless roadway split up the few sounds as if a million imps were cackling at a ghoulish joke.

Hervey at once went in front, and they walked on in silence. The dust rose up around their swinging lights. Once or twice Harry attempted conversation, but he found Hervey so deep in calculations and measurements that he felt sorry at disturbing him. So after this they trudged through the dust and the blackness without a word. Hervey's tall figure had to bend almost double under the low "top." Sometimes the lights flashed on the timber that lined the sides; upon the jagged roof, where sharp, big stones seemed on the point of dropping down on their heads; and sometimes the lights showed them a great heap of white stones and dust—one of the innumerable "falls" which sprinkle pit workings when the men neglect their posts for even a few days. They had to clamber over these heaps, going high into the hole up in the roof, and scrambling down the other side with scratched hands and faces.

They came to a place which showed two tram roads; one road turned sharply to the left and ran upwards.

"That's where I thought we had to turn," remarked Harry.

"We go a little farther in and turn down," said Hervey.

And on they went till they came to the spot—a wide gap on the right-hand side of the road. The tram-lines ran downhill.

"This makes the swamp those fellows spoke about," the young man suggested.

"I suppose so."

Hervey, although he generously made no hint of it, had long ago decided that his companion's boast about knowing

the workings had less foundation in fact than in the brave desire to help, and his heart warmed to the little chap more than ever. He could see that Harry knew nothing at all about the workings, or had forgotten. But he could also see that the young man had game enough to go through with the business.

"Better trim our lamps," said Hervey, at the top of the road.

They raised the lights to a level with their eyes. Hervey from habit, put up his eyeglass, and the light made it glitter like a small moon.

Most gingerly they used the trimming pins to knock off the burnt wick and send up a new supply. Then they restarted.

They came to a pit arrangement which barred their progress, a strong frame-work of wood, with side walls of turf, which effectually kept back every breath of the air that came from the shaft. Hervey went to a certain part of the structure and pulled. A thick plank door opened against him. They went through, and Harry closed it behind him.

"Well, up to now," Harry remarked, "we've seen nothing so awful."

"Seems to me, we are only just now getting into the real danger-spot."

"Oh," said the young man, and this view of it made him very quiet as they walked inward.

"Stop!" suddenly cried Hervey, and he bent to listen.

"What's that?"

"What did it sound like to you?"

"I say!" answered Harry with a little catch in his breath, "the queerest sound I ever heard."

"H'sh!"

They stood perfectly still. The dust about their lamps began to



"STOP! . . . WHAT'S THAT?"



## THE IDLER

roll away; the air-current bore off the heavy folds, and the remainder gradually lessened, leaving only a thin red veil around the lights. In the dead silence they heard the creaking of the timbers, and the dropping of small stones as they fell from the roof to the ground, for the pressure of the world upon these underground tunnels never ceases. And above these sounds they heard another, faint, yet unmistakable; like the wailing of a child.

"My God!" whispered Hervey, "is it possible that any human thing is lost in this dark maze?"

"Isn't it terrible?" whispered the younger man by way of answer.

"Let us go on," said the other. "Let us put these things"—he held out the chains and plans—"here in the side of the road. We can easily get back to them."

They put down the things in a heap between two arms of timber. Then, Hervey in front, they walked inward carefully.

Another strange sound made them stop short. A hollow noise, a bang, came apparently behind.

"That sounds like the slamming of a pit door," said Hervey. "Did you close that door behind us?"

"I am certain of it."

"How horribly strange! There is not a soul here but us two. How could that door have opened?"

"Perhaps someone is coming in."

"Then we shall see his light," replied Hervey, knowing the peculiarities of mines. "The road is perfectly straight."

They turned and looked back, half expecting, half dreading, to see the light of a pit lamp. But although the echoes of the sound still rolled around them in the dark roadway they saw not the faintest glimmer of a light.

Then again from the far beyond in the blackness came the weak, broken, wailing sounds they had heard before.

"By heavens!" said Hervey, "I don't know what to make of this."

"What do you think we had better do?" asked the youth, and into the question his troubled state put the definite meaning that he would prefer to go back out of the pit altogether. He could not help feeling the dread of the middle of the night under such weird influences.

"What can we do except the thing for which we came? We can't go back without doing that. If we are afraid to work here, do you think the men will get over their fears? We must clear it up, please God."

"But listen to *that*!" cried the young man.

The wailings came back, louder, like the cries of one in agony.

"We will face it," said Hervey.

Bending under the timbers across the low roof he went slowly inwards towards the strange sounds. Harry followed cautiously.

They came to a place where a road turned upward to the right. Here they stopped, for the cry they had before heard now sounded more distinctly; sometimes it sounded like a scream. Then it died away into a long wail. And the silence that followed became more terrifying than the sound itself.

"That cry came from this road on the right," declared Hervey.

He braced himself and went up the road with his friend behind him.

They carefully looked from side to side and in the middle of the roadway, putting their lights close to the ground, in the search for the mysterious cause of the sounds.

Suddenly a terrific shriek burst out of the blackness ahead. The shock of it pulled them up. They stood holding their breath, the younger man clinging to his friend.

The scream became less piercing—less violent; it died away into a wail as before; it seemed to end in a sob.

"What is it—what is it?" gasped young Pryce.

"To me," said Hervey, "it sounded like the sob of a woman fainting."

"A woman!"

"God knows what it is. Let us find out. This is one of the disused workings, judging from the look of it."

Stooping yet lower in this old road, he went cautiously to the place where they last heard the sound. They came, according to their judgment, to the actual spot. They searched all around the road, the sides, in between the timbers, even the roof. They found nothing.

"I could swear this was the actual spot," said Hervey.

"And I," said Harry in confirmation.

"But there's nothing here."

"Except a most strange smell."

"Perhaps its being an old working accounts for that. Let us go farther in. We may have judged the distance badly."

Inward they went, searching carefully.

Presently they heard a sobbing and wailing, faintly—but *behind them*.

Hervey stopped. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

For the first time a fear that he had been reckless came upon him. He had brought not only himself into unknown dangers, but the brother of the dearest girl in the world. But he kept the thought to himself.

"Do you notice the strange odour?" his young friend asked in a whisper. "It's like the heavy scent of wreaths and crosses in a death chamber."

"This is a most strange business," Hervey answered. "Let me pass you."

He pushed by his young friend and led the way down the road very slowly, throwing his light around him, wondering upon what strange object it would fall. Harry came close behind.

The sounds died away.

The searchers discovered nothing.

"By Jove! I'm fairly fagged," said young Pryce, wearily. "Do you mind me resting a little, Hervey?"

"My dear chap," said Hervey, full of

sympathy, "let us rest, by all means; it will do us both good."

They sat down in the side of the roadway. Now one peculiarity of a rest underground expresses itself in the way you dispose of your lamp. Instinctively you put it at your head if you lie down; and, if sitting, you make a firm place for it on the ground between your feet. So did these two.

The timber at their backs, and above their heads, and across the other side of the road, by its cracked and bent condition, told of enormous pressure—"squeeze," the colliers call it.

"Here is that death-smell more than ever," said Harry.

"I think——" began his friend.

But he could say no more.

A scream, a fiendish yell, terrible and terrifying, burst out from the stones upon which they sat. Not even a man with nerves like strips of steel could remain unmoved. Hervey leaped up. And as for his young friend, the terror of it overpowered him. He jumped up and darted outwards, and, as he had sat inside his companion, he dashed over the lamps and against Hervey, who, quite unprepared to withstand him, fell heavily upon the tram rails with his head against the metals and the senses knocked out of him.

Young Pryce fled; and, if he had a thought, he believed that Hervey followed close at his heels. He ran without guidance and without light into the darkness; but the black silence ahead had less terrors for the lad than the sounds behind him.

As for Hervey, a sturdy athletic body with a good circulation presently lifted the load from his brain. Consciousness came back. He opened his eyes, but could not see; blackness enclosed him like the walls of a dungeon where sunlight or starlight never glimmered. And all around him, out of the darkness, came the moaning and wailing and sobbing of the mysterious Thing. He shut his ears with his fingers.



This flimsy escape gave him at least a moment for clear thought, and in that one little moment the thought that came uppermost did not concern his own welfare at all; the real unselfishness of his nature at once asserted itself—his anxiety for the safety of his young friend.

"Harry!" he called.

He drew away his fingers from his ears, hoping for a sign that his friend remained alive and safe. But no human response came to his call. The echoes of his voice clattered weirdly among the other sounds that made him shudder from head to foot.

"What in heaven's name has happened?" he gasped.

Then his strong masculine spirit asserted itself, notwithstanding that on all sides the ghoulish moaning and wailing oppressed him.

He tried to rise. He drew himself up upon his hands and knees. One of his hands touched something warm.

He shuddered, but determinedly clutched at the thing. He found it a tangible object.

"One of our lamps," he muttered, "not cold. Then I can't have been unconscious long. Is the other lamp about? Perhaps Harry is lying senseless near me."

He groped about the ground. His moving hand touched the other lamp.

Once more he made a search for his friend. He gripped the two "dark" lamps in one hand, and moved slowly.

He knew that his direction led him down the roadway.

The strange cries began to die away in petulant sobs.

He dragged his right foot along the ground, hoping it might strike against the body of his late companion.

The cries behind him ceased; absolute silence followed.

Then a stranger, more mysterious, sound than ever sent a cold shiver through him. He stopped. He heard a scraping sound coming towards him

out of the awful blackness, as of a body dragging itself along the ground.

Hervey braced himself for attack. He thrust his arms out to protect his face, and leaped forward.

"In the name of heaven!" cried a voice. "What's that?"

The two bodies came in contact.

"Harry!"

"Hervey!"

"Whew!"

"By Jove!"

"Are you safe and sound, Harry?"

No answer came to this for a moment. Then the young man's voice said:—

"I've hurt something. I was crawling back to look for you."

"Ah!"

Hervey caught his arm and helped him. They groped their way down. They came to the door through which they had come.

Harry wanted to rest.

"Come a little farther out," Hervey said; "on the main road, where the wind is strong."

They went outward. Hervey knew the way, because of the direction in which the air came. He faced the current, because the air blew in from the shaft bottom.

They came to a part where the wind felt keen upon their cheeks.

"Now sit down," said Hervey.

Harry did so. He heard his friend fumbling in his pockets.

"*Not one!*" he exclaimed. Then he turned and said anxiously: "For the Lord's sake, say you have matches in your pocket! Not a single one is left in my box!"

In an instant every finger of the young man groped in every pocket. He drew out a silver match-box, opened it with extreme care, tilted it into his left hand.

"Three!" he shouted.

"Luck is in our way," said Hervey, in a satisfied tone. "Now let me have them, and I'll relight the lamps."

"But," cried Harry, rather terrified, "you know, of course—but won't there

be danger if you expose a flame underground?"

"Danger that this strong wind might blow all the matches out—yes," returned Hervey, quietly. "But no other danger just here. With such a current of air no inflammable gas could live."

He unscrewed the bottom part of the lamps, which held the wick, turned close into the road wall, made a sheltering wing of his jacket, and struck a match. The little flame, breaking into the blackness, dazzled their eyes. Hervey carefully relit the two lamps, screwed them up, and handed one to his friend.

They sat resting silently for a few moments, watching the rats that ran furtively through the area of light along the bottom of the opposite side wall.

"A little light is a pleasant thing," remarked Hervey.

Young Pryce did not speak for a few seconds. Then he said in deep remorse: "You must think me a coward, Hervey."

Hervey put an arm affectionately around the lad's neck.

"Nothing of the kind, Harry."

"Upon my soul," earnestly declared the young man, "as soon as my senses came back to me, I—I turned back—to do what I could to help you."

"My dear chap," Hervey said, most reassuringly, "that's all right—quite all right. Now, you rest here while I go and finish this business."

He took his lamp and stood up, his face turned inwards to the workings.

"What!" cried Harry. "Are you going to face *that* again?"

"Am I going to turn my back on it, do you think? No, I've got to clear this matter up to-night, if Satan and all his brood are in it. If you would prefer it, Harry—you are not so old or experienced as I am—you may, without any slur upon your courage, either rest here or make your way out and tell them I shall be able to clear it up thoroughly for them by the morning."

"No, Hervey," said young Pryce, with

much admiration of his friend. "I feel safer with you than I could anywhere else. I'm going in with you."

"But your hurt leg——"

"I can limp in well enough."

And inwards they went once more.

They went through the door. Hervey himself took care to close it.

Scarcely had they gone fifty yards when through the darkness came a hollow sound as if someone had mysteriously passed through the door.

"There it is again," whispered Harry.

Hervey said nothing. He walked gravely on, until they came to the road on the right.

"Here," he thought, "is the mystery." They turned up.

"Stop," pleaded the younger man.

Down through the darkness came a piercing wail.

Hervey resolutely pressed upward. The cry continued. He went cautiously on.

"Stay here, Harry," he commanded.

The young man stopped, his limbs trembling.

Now Hervey did a peculiar thing. As he came near the mysterious wailing, the sound made his hair rise, it made the perspiration roll down his face. But he fumbled at his waistcoat, he raised his light, and he deliberately put up his eyeglass to look at the ghost. He could see nothing.

Harry, watching in agony, saw the light move from spot to spot. He heard the screaming and wailing. He saw Hervey's light move slowly to a particular part of the timbered sides. Then a shriek of terror came from the youth, for he saw—he actually saw a ghostly blue form suddenly leap out and snatch away the light. He could see nothing of Hervey.

Now, if ever, the youth wished to run. But the real heart of him possessed courage. He ran—but to the danger-spot: not away from it.

"Hervey!" he shouted.

"Here, Harry!" came the welcome



answer. Then Hervey added quickly: "Keep back—get as far away as you can. Quick—for heaven's sake!"

Harry drew back. In a few seconds his friend joined him.

"Did you see it?" asked he, panting.

"The ghost?"

"Ghost, Harry. There's more danger in the thing you saw than a million ghosts. There's death for a thousand men in it. If your light came a yard closer, we'd see no more ghosts."

"What is it, Hervey?"

"First let us get out and home for to-night. You have the light. Lead the way, as quickly as your hurt will let you."

The excitement prevented the young man from feeling pain. They went out, at a brisk pace.

"What was it, Hervey?"

"The colliers said they were warnings of danger. And so they are. It's a wonder a man of them was left alive a day! The barrier *is* too thin. The pressure of the old workings upon this part has had a dangerous effect. The squeeze you saw is forcing gas out of every crevice with a power that makes it screech. The odour of the death-chamber is the peculiar smell. There are chemical elements in it beyond my knowledge."

"But," earnestly asked his companion, "didn't you see a ghost?"

"No."

"Well," said the young man, most solemnly, "I did."

"No."

"I swear it——"

"You saw the gas catch my lamp and

swell into a great blue flame and vanish. The miracle is that it didn't burst the lamp and mix with the oxygen around us."

"What would happen?"

"We would be burned to cinders."

"Oh!"

Silence followed, except for the thud of their footsteps in the dust, which rose around the one light.

"But what about the mysterious being that came through the door?" said the curious youth.

"I should say the squeeze has blocked one of the airways, and the current in another road is blowing open the door spasmodically."

"Then," said Harry, sorrowfully, "the pit is ruined—and my poor old dad!"

"Certainly not—nothing of the kind," returned Hervey, with absolute confidence. "I'll get this part of the workings—it's useless anyhow—walled up—filled with rubbish. I'll get fifty men to do that—do it as that kind of thing is always done—work without lights. The men won't be at all afraid of that. And in two days the whole pit will be in full swing again. I'll stop and see that it is finished."

"Then you are not going back to town straight away?"

"No—o," returned Hervey.

And I may mention that when he eventually returned to town, such a change had his visit made in Lord Glyn-cynon's attitude, he went with a decidedly happy smile, and the date of a decidedly fascinating event written in the diary of his heart.

# WEE MACGREGGOR

## THE ROBINSONS GO FISHING

By J. J. B.

*Illustrated by Angusine Macgregor*

**G**RANPAW," cried Macgregor from the doorstep, "are ye no' comin' oot to the fishin' wi' me an' Paw an' Maw?"

"Na, na," Mr. Purdie replied, coming out of the parlour, where he had just settled down to his after-tea pipe. "I'm gettin' ower auld fur gaun oot in wee boats."

"Are ye feart?"

"Ay, I'm feart a big fish gets the haud o' me," said the old man good-naturedly. "Ye wudna like to see a whale soomin' awa' wi' yer puir auld Granpaw, wud ye, Macgregor?"

"N—naw," the youngster replied with the slightest hesitation, perhaps tempted for a moment by the exciting vision suggested by Mr. Purdie's words. "Naw, I wudna like that, Granpaw. But ye tell't me afore there wis nae whales at Rothesay."

"Deed, ye're the yin fur mindin' things, laddie! But I wis jist jokin' about the whale. It's the cauld I'm feart fur, an' the wat. It gets intil ma auld banes, ye see. So yer Granmaw an' me'll jist bide in the hoose an' tak' guid care o' Jeannie till ye come back wi' yer fish. . . . Here yer Paw an' Maw comin'. Are ye ready fur the road?"

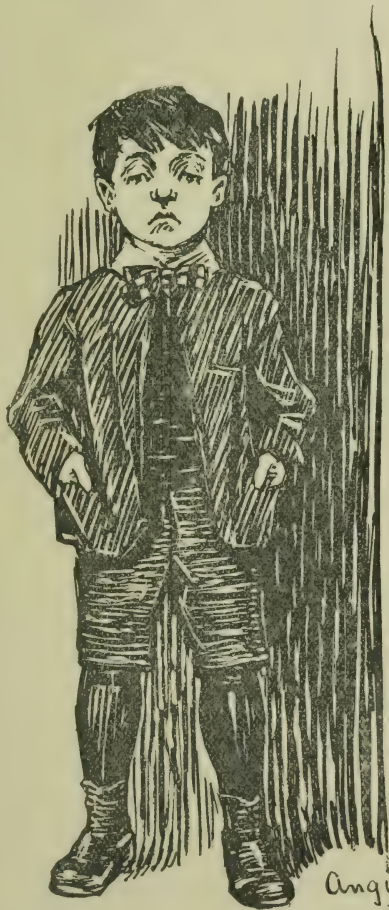
"Ay, I'm ready."

John and Lizzie appeared from the kitchen, where the former had been playing with his daughter while the latter helped her mother to wash up.

Lizzie regarded her son for an instant, and said a trifle sharply: "Did I no' tell ye to pit on yer auld troosers, Macgregor?"

"I dinna like my auld yins, Maw."

"Weel, ye're no' gaun oot to the fishin' in yer guid yins. I'm no' gaun to ha'e yer nice new navy-bew yins



*Angusine -  
Macgregor*

"WEARING AN EXAGGERATED LOOK OF MARTYRDOM."

spiled afore ye've had them a week. The saut watter'll jist ruin them. Awa' an' pit on yer auld yins this meenit!"



"Sailors aye wears navy-bew claes, Maw, an' ma auld yins is faur ower ticht," said her son appealingly.

"I'm no' heedin' whit sailors wears. Weans maun wear whit they're tell't."

"But my auld yins is faur ower——"

"Macgregor canna help growin', Lizzie," interposed John.

His wife took no notice of the observation, and Macgregor, realising that his case was hopeless, retired to do as he was bidden. In about five minutes he returned wearing an exaggerated look of martyrdom.

"Are ye no' wantin' to gang oot to the fishin'?" his mother inquired. "Ye needna come unless ye like."

"I want to gang oot to the fishin', Maw," he returned in a subdued tone.

"Weel, ye'll need to pit on yer top-coat, dearie," said Lizzie, losing her severity.

"It's no' cauld. I'm no' needin' ma top-coat."

"Pit on yer top-coat when I tell ye!" she said firmly.

Macgregor donned the garment in question.

"See an' catch a nice haddie fur ma breakfast, Macgregor," said Mr. Purdie, cheerfully, with the kindly idea of closing up the little rift.

"An' a wee whitin' fur mines," cried Mrs. Purdie, appearing on the scene.

"Dod, ay!" laughed John, taking his son's hand and gently gripping his wife's arm. "Macgregor'll attend to yer orders jist as if he wis a fishmonger. Wull ye no', Macgregor?"

"Dod, ay!" said Macgregor, suddenly recovering his spirits under his father's genial influence.

"Macgregor! I'm shair I've tell't ye a thoosan' times ye're no' to say——" Lizzie began.

"Come awa', come awa'!" cried John, "or we'll no' get a boat the nicht!"

Lizzie waved an adieu to her daughter in Mrs. Purdie's arms, and the trio set out for the shore.

"Can I get oarin', Paw?" the young-

ster inquired when the boat-hirer had given the craft a farewell push which sent it some five yards from the shore.

"Na, na," said Lizzie. "Yer Paw'll tak' us to the fishin' place hissel' . . . John, fur yon favour, dinna get in front o' thon steamer!"

"It's twa-three mile awa', Lizzie."

"Weel, keep close to the shore onywey."

"But it's a guid bit oot to the fishin' place," said John.

"I'm no' heedin'. Ye've got to keep close to the shore till the steamboat's by," said the nervous Lizzie.

It was Macgregor's turn. He sniggered rudely and remarked: "The steamboat's by lang syne. It's sailin' awa' frae us!"

"Dod, but the wean's richt!" cried his father, with a laugh.

"Aweel," said Lizzie, impatiently, "awa' to the fishin' place as quick's ye like, an' if we're a' droondit I'll ha'e an easy conscience onywey."

"Hooch, ay!" We'll a' ha'e easy consciences!" exclaimed her husband jocularly.

"Ye micht ken better nor to mak' fun o' solemn subjects, John." Mrs. Robinson spoke reprovingly and possibly a trifle offensively.

John did the best thing that could be done under the circumstances. He kept silence and rowed his hardest till they reached the fishing ground, where a small cluster of boats had already anchored.

"Paw! Thonder a man caught a fish!" said Macgregor, excitedly, half-rising.

"Keep yer sate, dearie," said his mother, smiling with recovered good-nature, as she laid a restraining hand on his shoulder.

"Paw, can I get flingin' in the anchor?"

For once in his life John said "No!"

"Whit wey, Paw? I wud mak' a graun' splash!"

"Na, na, Macgregor," put in Lizzie.

"The anchor's a dangerous thing. There wis yinst twa laddies oot in a boat, and yin o' them wis castin' the anchor, an' he gaed ower wi' 't an' wis cairrit down to the bottom o' the sea, an' droondit. Ay!"

"Whit wey did the ither laddie no' pu' him up?"

"He — he wis ower heavy."

"Whit wey did he no' sclim' up the rape hissel'?"

"His claes had gotten fankled in the anchor."

Macgregor considered for a few seconds.

"Is that a true story, Maw?" he demanded.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Lizzie, as John flung the anchor overboard and the rope ran out.

"I cud ha'e made a bigger splash," remarked the boy.

"Maw, wis thon a true story?"

"Ye better be gettin' the lines ready," said John, unconsciously coming to his wife's rescue. "Macgregor, dae ye ken hoo to pit on yer baits?"

"Ay, fine! . . . The baits is awfu' slippy, Paw."

"See an' no' let the hooks catch yer fingers."

"Nae fears, Paw!" sang out Macgregor, who had already bated one hook with a mussei and the other



Angeline Macgregor

"'AN' A WEE WHITIN' FUR MINES,' CRIED MRS. PURDIE."



with one of the knees of his knickerbockers.

"John," sighed Lizzie, "I dinna like tichin' thae slithery beasts. Are they leevin'?"

"Na, na, wumman, they're no' leevin'. Jist bide a wee, an' I'll come an' bait yer line fur ye," returned John, cheerfully. He made the anchor rope fast, and came cautiously to the stern. "Whit's ado, Macgregor?" he asked of his son, who was struggling with the hook in his nether garments.

"It's a mercy I made him change his guid troosers," Mrs. Robinson observed, when her husband with his knife had, not unskillfully, extracted the errant hook.

"If I had had on ma guid troosers, I wudna ha'e let the hook catch them," said Macgregor.

"Mphm!" murmured Lizzie.

"Thae auld yins is that oosie, they wud catch onythin'."

"Haud yer tongue, Macgregor," said Lizzie, "an' see if ye canna catch a fish."

His father, having put the baits in order, Macgregor dropped the sinker and hooks over the side, and gradually unwound the line.

"Paw, it'll no gang doon ony furdur," he said, after a short silence.

"Ye'll be at the bottom, ma mannie," John explained.

"But I dinna feel ony fish."

"Patience! patience! Pu' up a wee bit, an' keep yer line hingin', an' when ye feel onythin' at it, gi'e it a chugg."

John illustrated what he meant, and proceeded with baiting his wife's line.

"Paw, I think I feel somethin'!"

"Weel, gi'e a chugg."

Macgregor jerked so strongly that he fell off his narrow seat, upset the bait dish over his mother's feet, and caused her to cry:—

"Oh, John, John! I kent we wis in fur a wattery grave!"

John smiled reassuringly as he assisted his son back to his seat and set about gathering up the mess of homeless shell-

fish. "Dinna fash yersel', Lizzie," he said, when he had baited her line "Macgregor's fine, an' he'll no' tumble again. Noo fur the fish!"

But the fish were not so enthusiastic, and at the end of about twenty minutes of silence and expectation, Macgregor observed:—

"Paw, I dinna feel onythin' yet."

"Aw, ye've got to gi'e the fish time," his father replied hopefully. "I expect they'll be smellin' about the baits the noo an' gettin' up their appetites, as it were."

"I wisht I cud see richt doon to the bottom, Paw. If I seen a fish I wud jist nick it wi' ma hooks."

"Wud ye?"

"Ay, wud I!"

"Macgregor," said Lizzie, who was beginning to feel at home in the boat and to enjoy the calm sea and mild air, "ye sudna boast aboot whit ye ken ye cudna dae; sud he, John?"

"Och, whit's the odds as lang's ye're happy? Are ye feelin' the cauld, Lizzie?" said her husband.

"No' a bit. I'm enjyin' masel' rale weel, John," she returned.

"That's guid!" he exclaimed in a tone of supreme satisfaction. "I'm shair the fish'll shin be comin'. . . Macgregor, pu' up yer line, and see if yer baits is a' richt."

The youngster hauled in, to find that the baits were intact, showing no signs of having been touched.

"Never heed," said John. "Let doon yer line again. . . . Ha'e ye had ony nibbles, Lizzie?"

"No' yet, John," replied his wife, whose interest was absorbed by a young couple in a neighbouring boat. "I wud like to see Macgregor gettin' yin," she added in an undertone.

"Dod, ay! I wud like him to get the first fish."

"Ay, it would be nice if he got the first fish. . . . Macgregor, ye're no' to lean ower the side o' the boat like that."

"Whit wey, Maw?"

"Because ye'll maybe fa' in and get droondit."

"Nae fears, Maw. I wis jist lukin' at a jeely-fish. Whit wey dae they ca' them jeely-fish, Paw?"

"Because they're like jeely, Macgreggor."

"Ach, they're no' a bit like jeely. They wudna mak' a nice jeely piece, Paw, wud they?"

"Maybe no'," said John, jerking at his line. "Na; I

doot they wudna mak' a vera nice jeely piece, Macgreggor," he continued with another jerk. "'Deed, no! Fur there is a big difference atween a jeely fish an' a jeely piece—is there no', Lizzie?"

"Ay," said Mrs. Robinson, as though she had just been awakened from a dream. "Thon lad an' lass is gaun to get marrit, I'm thinkin'," she added, indicating the couple she had been regarding.

John jerked his line once more. "Ye're the yin to notice!" he said to his wife. Then to his son: "Macgreggor, ye micht tak' ma line till I see if yer baits is a' richt. Change places wi' me. Canny noo, an' dinna frichtin' yer Maw. . . . That's a clever laddie! . . . Haud on to ma line, an' maybe ye'll bring us luck."

Macgreggor changed places with his father, and the latter, with a wink at



"OH, JOHN, JOHN! I KENT WE WIS IN FUR A WATTERY GRAVE!"

Mrs. Robinson, who seemed to be somewhat suspicious, began to pull in the line.

But ere he had drawn up three fathoms there was an excited yell from Macgreggor.

"Paw! There's a fish on ma line! It's chuggin' like mad! Whit'll I dae, Paw?"

"Pu' it up, ma mannie," said John, trying to conceal his delight.

Macgreggor, gurgling with excitement, hauled in the line, and soon, with his father's assistance, a fine fish—quite an unusually big fish for Rothsay Bay—was flopping in the bottom of the boat.

"Is 't a haddie, Paw?" cried the youngster, while John extracted the hook. "Is 't a whitenin'?"

"A whitin'? Na! It's a code, Macgreggor."

"Can I get bashin' it, Paw?"

"Macgreggor," exclaimed his mother, "ye mauna be savage."



"I dinna like codes," cried Macgregor. "They mak' code ile! I want to bash its face!"

"Whisht, man!" said John. "It's a bonny fish, an' ye're no' to spile it. It'll dae fine fur wur breakfast. My! ye sud be prood at catchin' sic a graun fish."

The boy looked proud, and refrained from his brutal intentions.

"Did ye ever catch as big a fish, Paw?" he inquired.

"Never!" said his father. "But you're the lucky yin, Macgreegor."

"John," put in Lizzie, "the wind's gettin' up."

Shewasquite right. The smooth seawas quickly rippled, and within five minutes the ripples turned into little breakers.

"I want to catch anither yin, Paw," said Macgregor.

"I want to get hame," said Lizzie.

John obliged his wife. He pulled up the lines, then the anchor, and got out the oars.

"We'll gang oot to the fishin' anither nicht," he said to his son. "It's gaun to be stormy."

"Ach!" ejaculated Macgregor, disgustedly.

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"John," whispered Lizzie, when they were safely ashore, "it wis rale nice o' ye to let the laddie think he had caught the fish."

"Tits, wumman!" said John, smiling.

"Paw," said Macgregor, a little later, "I'm vexed ye didna catch a fish the nicht."

"Aw, ye're ower smairt fur maist folk, ma mannie."

"Ay; I'm gey smairt, Paw."



Angus Macgibbon  
1903

"PAW! THERE'S A FISH ON MA LINE!"

## THEIR CHRISTMAS EVE

### A LOVE INCIDENT OF A YULETIDE EVE

By GRACE S. RICHMOND

HE lay back among the crimson pillows in his big chair, close beside the fire, with his eyes on the burning logs. A tablet and pen lay in his lap, and he had written a few paragraphs, but he was listening now to certain sounds which came from below stairs: voices, laughter, scurrings up and down the hall and staircase; then the slam of a heavy door, and absolute silence within the house. Three times in the last fifteen minutes before the door closed somebody had looked in upon the occupant of the big chair to say something like this:—

"Oh, Jerry—sorry we couldn't spend Nan's last evening with you. Too bad this wretched dance had to come to-night—Christmas Eve, too. Busy, aren't you, as usual? At work on those sketches of country life in winter? You clever boy—who but you could make so much out of so little? Anything we can do for you before we are off? Nan hates to go, since it's the very last evening of her visit. She thought we all ought to give up and stay with you, but we told her you disliked to be 'babied.' Well—good-night, old fellow. Don't write too late. You know the doctor thinks plenty of sleep is part of your cure."

That was the sort of thing they had been saying to him for a year now—a year. And he seemed no nearer health than when he had been sent home from his gloriously busy, abounding life in London, where he was succeeding brilliantly, far beyond anybody's expectations—except those of the few knowing ones who had recognised the genius in him in his school and college days. But he had never given up. Invalided in body,

his mind worked unceasingly; and a certain part of the literary work he had been doing he did still. He said it kept him from going off his head.

When the stillness of the usually noisy house had become oppressive he took up his tablet and pen again. He wrote a sentence or two—slowly; then another—more slowly; and drew an impatient line through them all. He tossed the tablet over to a table near at hand and sat staring into the fire. Certain lines about his mouth grew deep.

A knock on his door roused him, and he realised that it had sounded before. "Come in," he called, and the door opened and closed behind him. An unmistakable sound, as of the soft rustle of delicate skirts, swept across the floor and paused behind his chair. He drew himself up among his pillows, and strained his neck to look over his shoulder. A young face, full of life and colour, laughed down into his.

"You?" he said in an amazed breath—"you? Why, Nan!"

He reached up one hand and took hers, and drew her with his slight strength around where he could see her. It did not take much strength. She came, laughing still, and sweeping a graceful low bend before him.

"Don't ask me why," she said with a shake of her head. "I didn't want to go. I knew I wouldn't go all the time I was dressing. But I dressed. I knew I could argue with them better when I got this gown on. I think I have rather a regal air in it, don't you?"

"I could tell better if you were not wearing that shapeless thing over it."

"Oh, but I've taken off my gloves,



and I can't stand bare arms and shoulders here at home." She shrugged the shoulders under the thin silken garment with which she had covered them.

"And you're not going to the dance at all?"

"Certainly not. I preferred to stay at home."

"Why?"

"I told you not to ask me why. But I suppose you won't talk about anything else until you know."

She sat down opposite him before the fire, looking up at the great branches of holly on the chimneypiece above, their scarlet berries gleaming saucily among the rich green of their leaves. She reached up and pulled off a spray; then she glanced at him. He was silently surveying her. In her delicate blue gauzy gown she was something to look at in the fire-glow.

"I wanted to spend my last evening here with you," she said.

He smiled back at her. "Three people looked in here this evening and told me you thought you ought."

She answered indignantly. "I didn't say I ought. I didn't think it. I wanted to. And I didn't want them to stay. That is why I let them all array themselves before I refused to go."

He was still smiling. "Delicate flattery," he said, "adapted to an invalid. You should never let an invalid think you pity him—at least not a man-invalid who got knocked out when playing a vigorous game for all it was worth."

"Jerry," she said, looking full at him out of a pair of eyes which were capable of saying eloquent things quite by themselves, "do you think all the hours I've spent with you in this month I've been visiting Hester were spent from pity?"

"I hope not," he answered lightly. "I'm sure not. We've had some pleasant times, haven't we?"

She turned from him without speaking, and, clasping her hands loosely in front

of her, bent forward and studied the fire. Presently she got up and took a fresh log from the basket.

"Be careful," he warned as she stooped to lay it in place. "Put it on gently. The sparks might fly, and that cobweb dress of yours——"

She laid the log across the other half-burnt sticks, and started back with a little cry as a dozen brilliant points of flame flew toward her.

"Don't do that again," he protested sternly, with none of the invalid in his voice. "I don't like to see you do such things when I couldn't stir to save you, no matter what happened."

She stood looking down at him. "Jerry," she said, "I'll tell you why I stayed to-night. I wanted to talk with you about something. I want your help."

His eyes told her that he would give it if he could.

"Do you mind if I sit on a pillow here before the fire?" she asked, bringing one from the couch. Jerry had plenty of pillows. Since his breakdown every girl who had ever known him had sent him a fresh one. "Somehow I can talk better," she explained.

She settled herself on her cushion, her blue skirts lying in a light pile about her, her chin on her hand, her elbow on her knee.

"I always go straight to the point," she said. "I never know how to lead artfully up to a thing. Jerry, you know I am going to Paris to do some special work in illustrating?"

"Yes."

"I go with Aunt Elizabeth, and we shall live very quietly and properly, and I shall not have any of the—trials—so many young women workers have. My work will keep me very busy, and, I think, happy. I mean it shall. But, Jerry—I want something. You know you have always known me, because I was Hester's friend."

"Is this 'straight to the point'?" he asked, and there was a gleam of fun in

his eyes, though his lips were sober. But his interest was unmistakable.

"Very straight. But we have never been special friends, you and I."

"Haven't we. I congratulated myself we had."

"Not what I mean by that word." She sat looking into the fire for some little time, while he remained motionless, watching her, his eyes shaded by his hand. At length she said very earnestly, still staring fireward, while her cheeks took on a slight access of colour:

"I want to feel I have a friend—one friend—a real one, whom I leave behind me here—who will understand me and write to me, and whom I can count on—differently from the way I count on other friends."

He was studying her absorbedly. There came into his eyes a peculiar look as she made her frank statement.

"Then you haven't just that sort of a friend among all the men you know at home?"

"Not a single one. And I miss it. Not because I have ever had it," she added quickly.

He was silent for a little while, then he said very quietly: "You are offering me a good deal, Nan. Do you realise just how much? Friendship—such friendship—means more to me now than it ever did before."

"Does it?" she asked with equal quietness. "I'm glad of that."

"Because," he went on gravely, "I realise that it is the only thing I can ever have, and it must take the place of all I once—hoped for."

"Oh, why do you say that?" she cried impetuously.

"Since you are to be my friend now—my special friend—I can tell you what Doctor McDonough told me just two days ago: May I tell you that? I have told and shall tell no one else. Before you take the vows"—he smiled a little—"you should know what you are accepting."

"Tell me."

"He said—I might be better—much better—but I could never hope to be—my old self again."

"Oh, Jerry! Oh, Jerry!" Her voice was almost a sob. She turned about and reached up both hands to him, clasping his with a warm and tender grip.

"Is that what your friendship means?" he asked, holding her hands closely and looking down steadily into her eyes while his own grew brilliant. "If it does—it is going to be something a man might give up a good deal for."

"Oh, how can you take such a cruel disappointment so?" she breathed. "And to hear it just at Christmas, too. I've said all along that you were just the bravest person I ever knew. But now!—Jerry, I'm not worthy to be your friend."

"Ah, I'll not let you take back what you offered me. If you knew how I've wanted to ask it——"

"Have you, really?" she asked, so eagerly that he turned his head away for a moment and set his lips firmly together as if he feared he might presently be tempted to go beyond those straight boundaries of friendship. Somehow from the lips of such a girl as Nan this sort of thing was the most dainty flattery; at the same time it was unquestionably sincere.

"So you will seal the compact? Think it over carefully. I can never give you the strong arm a well man could."

"If you will teach me to acquire the sort of strength you have learned yourself," she said—and there was a hint of mistiness about those eyes of hers—"you will have given me something worth while."

Presently they were talking of her journey, to be begun on the morrow; of her work, in which she had come in the last year to remarkable success; of his work—the part which he could do and would continue to do, he said, with added vigour. They talked quietly but earnestly,



and each time she looked up into his face she saw there a new brightness, something beyond the mere patient acceptance of his hard trial.

"Jerry," she said all at once, breaking off in the midst of a discussion of certain phases of the illustrator's art, "you don't know how suddenly rich I feel. All the while you were doing such wonderful, beautiful things with your pen in town, and being made so much of, I was thinking, 'What an inspiration Jerrold Fullerton would be as a real friend.' But all the girls were——"

He laughed. "They won't trouble you now."

"But your friendship is worth more now than then."

He shook his head.

"It is—because *you* are more than you were then."

"I'm a mere wreck of what I was, Nan."

He did not say it bitterly, but he could not quite keep the sadness out of the uncompromising phrase.

She looked up at him, studying his face intently. It had always been a remarkably fine face, and on it the suffering of the past year had done a certain work which added to its beauty. He did not look ill, but the refinement which illness sometimes lends to faces of a somewhat too strongly cut type had softened it into an exceeding charm. Out of it the eyes shone with an undaunted spirit which told of hidden fires.

"I am glad a share of the wreckage falls to me," she said softly.

"Nan," he told her, while his lips broke irresistibly into a smile again, "I believe you are deliberately trying to burn a sweet incense before me to-night. Just how fragrant it is to a fellow in my shape I can't tell you. You would never do it if I were on my feet, I appreciate that; but I'm very grateful just the same."

"I'd like," she said, with eyes which fell now to the hands folded in her lap—and the droop of her head as he saw it, with the turned-away profile cut like

an exquisite silhouette against the fire was burnt into his memory afterward—"to have you remember this Christmas Eve—as I shall."

"Remember it?"

"Shall you?"

"Shall I!"

"Ah—who is deliberately trying to say nice things now?" But she said it rather faintly.

He lay back among his pillows with a long breath. "So you go to-morrow morning?"

"Early—at six o'clock. You will not see me. And I must go now. See, it is after eleven. Think of their making me go out this evening when I must be up at five and travel the next forty-eight hours. On Christmas Day, too. Isn't that too bad? But that's the price of my staying over to spend Christmas Eve with Jerry Fullerton—like the foolish girl that I am."

She rose and stood before him.

"Would you mind slipping off that—domino? I'd like to see you just as all the other fellows would have seen you if you had gone to the dance."

Smiling, and flushing a little, she drew off the silken garment, and the firelight bathed her softly rounded shoulders and arms in a rosy glow. He looked at her silently for a minute, until she said again that she must go, and took a step toward him, smiling down at him and holding out both hands.

"I don't know how I can spare my friend, when I've just found her," he said, searching her face with an intentness she found it difficult to bear. "I suppose I ought not to ask it, but—it's Christmas Eve, you know—and—you'll give me one more thing to remember—won't you, Nan?"

She bent, like a warm-hearted child, and laid her lips lightly upon his forehead, but he caught her hands.

"Is that the proper degree for friendship—and you feel that more would be too much?"

She hesitated; then, as his grasp drew

her, she stooped lower, blushing beautifully, to give the kiss upon his lips. But it was not the breath of a caress she would have made it. Invalids are sometimes possessed of unsuspected reserves of strength.

"Month! Won't you write every post?"

"Oh, Jerry!"

"Every week, then?"

"Will you?"

"I will, whether you do or not."



"'I'D LIKE,' SHE SAID, 'TO HAVE YOU REMEMBER THIS CHRISTMAS EVE—AS I SHALL.'"

She turned away then in a pretty confusion, said "Good-night," and went slowly toward the door.

"Oh, come back!" he cried. "Tell me—you will write often?"

"Oh, yes; every—month."

"Your ideas of friendship——"

"Are they too exacting?"

"No-o," she admitted, as if reluctantly. She was behind him now, her hands clasped together tightly, her eyes glowing with the light of a frightened purpose



which was overmastering her. He tried to turn and see her, but she defeated this. "Please come here," he begged.

She was silent, trying to breathe more naturally.

"Please——"

"What good will it do?" she asked at last. "I shall have to go, and you—won't——"

"Won't—what?"

She crept up close behind his chair.

"*Say it*," she whispered.

He reached out his hand with a commanding gesture. "Nan, come here. Say—what?"

She bent over the back of his chair and laid a soft, trembling hand on each side of his face.

"Please say it," she breathed.

He seized her hands, and drew them to his lips. "Nan, you are tempting me almost beyond my power. Do you mean to tempt me? Are you trying to?"

She leaned low, so that her breath swept his cheek, and whispered, "Yes."

"Oh, my God!" he groaned. "Nan—are you insane? What if I say it—then how much worse will it be? I can bear it better as it is now—and you—can't mean it."

"*Say it*," came the breath in his ear again.

He was silent for a while, breathing heavily. Presently he began to speak in a quiet tone, whose vibrations showed, nevertheless, the most rigid self-control. He still held her hands, resting there upon his shoulders; but he made no further effort to see her face.

"Nan," he said, "this friendship you give me is the dearest thing I ever knew. It is worth everything to me. Let me keep it while you go away for your year of work. Be the warmest friend to me you know how, and write me everything about yourself. Meanwhile—keep your heart free for—the man will surely come to claim it some day—a man who will be worthy of you in every way, soul, mind, and—body. I shall be happy in your——"

Her hand pulled itself away from his and was laid with a gentle insistence upon his mouth.

"Jerry," she said very softly, "that's enough—please. I understand. That had to be said. I knew you would say it. It's what you think you ought to say, of course. But—it's said now. You needn't repeat it. For it's not the thing—I'm waiting for you to say."

"Nan——"

"Would you make a poor girl do it all?" she questioned, with a suggestion of both laughter and tears in her voice.

"But, Nan——"

"I'm not used to it," she urged. "It's very embarrassing. And I ought to be asleep this minute, getting ready for my early start. I'm not quite sure that I shall sleep if you say it"—her voice dropped to a whisper again—"but I'm very sure I shall not if—you—don't."

"My dear girl——"

"That's hardly warm enough, is it—under the circumstances—when you won't see me for a year? Jerry—a whole year——"

"Nan—for the love of heaven come around here!"

"Not so much for the love of heaven as——"

"No—for the love of you—you—you!"

She came at last—and then she saw his eyes. But she could not meet them after the first glance. She lay in his arms, held there by a grasp so strong that it astonished her beyond measure. So, for a time; then he began to speak—in her ear now, where, in its pinkness, with a little brown curl touching his lips, it listened.

"You've made me say it, love, when for your sake I would have kept it back. But you know—you must know—nothing can come of it."

He heard her murmur "Why?"

"You know why."

"I don't."

He drew a deep breath.

"Don't you want me?" she asked—into his shoulder.

"Want you!"

"You've everything to offer me."

"Nan——"

"Everything I want. Jerry"—she lifted her head and looked for an instant into his eyes—"I shall die of heartache if you won't offer it."

"A wreck of a life——"

"I won't let you call it that again!" she flashed. "You—Jerrold Fullerton—whose merest scrawl is reviewed by every literary editor in the land. Do you think you can't do still better work with—with me?"

"But you wouldn't be marrying Jerrold Fullerton's mind alone?"

"No—his soul—all there is of him—his great personality—himself. And that's much more than I can give in return——"

"Nan, darling——"

"Yes?"

"Go to Paris for your year, but don't bind yourself to me. Then, when you come back, if——"

"If I'm still of the same mind—Jerry—you sound like the counsel of a wise and worldly grandmother," with a gleeful laugh.

"If I'm no worse—if I'm a little better—This is great medicine, Nan. I feel like a new man now. "If then——"

"Jerry!"

"Yes?"

"I shall not go at all unless—unless——"

"Yes?"

"Unless I am bound tight—tight—to you. I—I shouldn't feel sure of you!"

"Oh, there's no use resisting you," he said, half under his breath. "It's the sorriest bargain a woman ever made, but——"

"If she will make it——"

"Look at me, Nan."

"I can't—long," she complained. "Somehow you—you—blind me."

He laughed softly.

"I realise that—you are blind—blind. But I can't open your eyes. Somehow I'm losing the strength to try."

"I must go now," she said, gently trying to release herself. "Really, I must—yes, I must. Please, Jerry,—let me go, dear. Yes, yes—you must!" It took time, however, and was accomplished with extreme difficulty. "But I *can* go now. I couldn't when I said good-night before. Oh! it's striking twelve! Good-night, Jerry — merry Christmas, Jerry!"

Before she quite went, however, she came back once more to lean over the back of his chair and whisper in his ear:—

"Jerry——"

"Yes?"

"Am I really—engaged—to you?"

"Darling—bless you—I'm afraid you are."

"Afraid!"

"Nan—I'm the happiest cripple on earth!"

So she went softly out and closed the door. But it was not to sleep. As for the man she left behind, his eyes looked into the smouldering fire till morning. It was not the doctor's prescription, but it was the beginning of his cure.





"MADGE!"

## MAKING IT UP

By J. PHILPOT WITHAM

YES, they had quarrelled—*really* quarrelled this time. Oh! why had she been so hasty? He had called twice, and each time she had refused to see him. What had made her so perverse? He would never call again now. How could she expect him to? Madge Francillon's big brown eyes brimmed over with tears.

And there was only one clear day before the annual fancy dress ball, she reflected. How she had looked forward to it! How they two—she and Jack Cartwright—had planned the costumes they should wear, and all the fun they would have on the coming occasion. As a Gipsy Queen she would have looked charming—she sighed as she turned to where the dress lay just peeping from its tissue paper wrappings—and how handsome Jack would be in his Charles II. costume! But how could she go now?

It was too dismal for anything. Her tears flowed anew.

Suddenly she sat up. Yes, she *would* go after all. She would let him see *she* did not care. But no (faltering), how could she bear to see her Jack flirting with some other girl, and knowing that she was looking on?

Ah! Why not ask her cousin, Amy Slater, to exchange costumes? Amy, she remembered, had greatly admired her Gipsy dress; and they were about the same figure. Dressed in her cousin's Girton costume, she could see all without herself being recognised. Perhaps might even dance with Jack unknown to him.

To take pen and ink was the work of a moment; and after several attempts a letter was produced, of which the following is an extract:—

" . . . I know you will do as I wish, dear Amy; the Gipsy costume would suit you splendidly. I feel I simply *cannot* wear it now after Jack and I have quarrelled—you will understand, won't you, dear? So if you could let me have your Girton costume in exchange, I should be ever so much obliged. . . ."

To which a voluminous reply was received, the substance of which was, "Certainly, dear."

\* \* \* \* \*

That same evening Jack Cartwright sat smoking in his cosy chambers. With his long legs stretched out straight before him, hands in pockets, and eyes fixed on the blazing fire, he looked the very picture of despondency. On the opposite side of the fireplace was his bosom friend, Charlie Goode.

Here, too, the coming fancy dress ball was the subject uppermost in their minds.

Neither spoke for a time; and then Cartwright broke the silence:—

"No, old man. I don't care about going, and that's straight. It's all very well, but I don't relish seeing every silly ass in the room running after Madge, and myself unable to go near her." (The language was forcible, and, indirectly, hardly complimentary to the lady; but Goode made allowance for the state of his friend's feelings.)

"What a little witch she looked in that Gipsy rig-out! Confound it, that's what started the tiff!" He sighed profoundly.

"Oh, cheer up, old chap! She'll come round in a day or two. Only a lovers' quarrel, isn't it?"

"Maybe," and Cartwright puffed gloomily at his briar. "But the fact remains that she refuses to see me.





"IT WAS TOO DISMAL FOR ANYTHING."

I've called twice. And the ball comes off to-morrow, so that there is no earthly possibility of making it up before then.

"If it weren't that's she's certain to recognise me, I'd go. But I've had my Charles II. dress some time now—in fact, it was Madge who proposed it—and there's no time to get another. You see, I don't care to get the cold shoulder before a roomful of people."

"Tell you what, old man," suggested Goode. "You're welcome to mine if you like—a Monk, cowl and all complete—and I'll wear yours. I should rather fancy myself as Charles II."

Cartwright brightened up at this. He saw light again. He might even be able to dance with his divinity. Might even—indeed, what might not happen? He smiled.

"Would you? Thanks awfully, old man! I should be delighted. I feel sure if only I can get a word with Madge, I shall be able to put matters right again. All's fair in love, you know, old chap, and, dressed as Charles II., I am sure in her present mood she wouldn't let me get a word with her."

And so it was agreed that *they* should exchange costumes.

"But, for heaven's sake, old man," said Cartwright, a sudden thought

striking him, "be on your best behaviour to-morrow evening. Remember that, in the eyes of Madge at least, you are responsible for *my* character. So—go easy!"

"Ah, well!" he ejaculated, as the sound of his friend's footsteps died away, "I hope to goodness it will turn out all right!"

The night of the dance arrived in due course. But to two people at least the previous twenty-four hours seemed the longest they had ever experienced. The Hall was in a blaze of light. The masked dancers in their gay costumes made a veritable kaleidoscope of colour.

Madge, masked and completely disguised in her borrowed Girton cap and gown, entered with her aunt and cousin, the latter wearing, of course, Madge's Gipsy Queen costume.

Would Jack be there? Madge wondered. She cast her eyes swiftly round the room, secure in the knowledge that even he would not recognise her.

Yes, there he was in the corner. She caught sight of the Charles II. costume at once. Had she not discussed every detail of it with him? Her heart beat wildly. Would he look for her in her Gipsy dress—the dress her cousin was now wearing? She watched the Merry Monarch eagerly, not dreaming that he was not her own Jack.

No! With barely a glance he passed the Gipsy by. (Goode had remembered his friend's parting injunction. For Cartwright's sake he had to be a very decorous Charles II. that evening.) Madge's heart sank. Had it gone so far as this? Was she nothing to Jack now? Oh! for the seclusion of her own room and the luxury of a right-down good cry! But she must go through with it now at all costs.

How that Monk was eyeing her cousin. Had he never seen a gipsy before? Why did he stare so? Yes, he was coming towards them! He was going to speak to—Amy! And, leaning lightly on the Monk's arm, her cousin joined the throng of merry dancers.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jack Cartwright's expectations ran high. Completely hidden in his Monk's costume, he held the Gipsy Queen lightly in his arms as they floated dreamily round to the strains of one of Strauss's beautiful waltzes. What might not happen? thought he. What opportunity of reconciliation might not occur now they were again together? Unconsciously he clasped his partner tighter in his arms, and at length ventured to whisper a few tender words in her ear. She would know his voice, he argued, and the eyes of love would recognise him even under his Monk's cowl.

Alas! With a sudden hauteur his companion drew herself away, and coldly suggested their return to her friends, where she seated herself, and further opportunities for a private conversation were at an end.

Her next partner coming up, Cartwright strolled moodily away, with bitter thoughts surging in his breast. Had she recognised him? Surely she must have done so. He recalled her frigid reply to his loving words, and his heart sank. Was it indeed all over between them? He leaned despondingly against the wall, and idly watched the throng around him.

Knights and ladies, clowns and pierrots, sailors, flower girls, and a hundred other characters revolved slowly past him. Then a Girton Girl on the arm of his friend Goode, resplendent in his own Charles II. costume. Ah! Amy Slater! Madge's cousin and confidante, mused the unhappy lover. He would seek her out after the next dance and lay the case before her. Of her sympathy he felt assured. Why had he not



"CARTWRIGHT STROLLED MOODILY AWAY."

thought of it before? He and she had always been good friends. How glad he was he remembered that Madge had told him her cousin was to attend as a Girton Girl. He waited impatiently for the dance to end, his eyes eagerly following the Gipsy Queen, merrily laughing with a Grenadier, in whom Cartwright recognised the weedy young Hopkins, and found himself smiling at the alarming amount of padding that young gentleman must have resorted to to fill out that swelling chest. He must find it uncommonly warm, thought Jack; and if the youth's face was a true index of his feelings, he undoubtedly did.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile the little Girton Girl was whirling round in the arms of the brilliant—but, on this occasion only, very sedate—Charles II., blissfully unconscious that her lover, under the fond delusion that she was Amy Slater, was anticipating an interview with her. Was she not with her Jack, she said to herself, as she gave her companion's



arm just the least suspicion of a squeeze. And yet how cold he seemed. She might be a complete stranger by the tone of his conversation. But, she reflected, how could he know who she was?

Should she raise her mask? she asked herself. She decided she would not—not just yet at any rate. At present it was sufficient to find herself again with him, even under these strange circumstances. She would wait. Perhaps he would detect her, even under her disguise. The thought filled her with joy.

But no! it was not to be (which, indeed, was not to be wondered at!) The music came to a close, and Charles II. calmly brought his partner back to her friends, and resigned her to the Monk, who claimed her for the next dance.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Would you rather sit out?" suggested the Monk, noticing his companion's dejected air, and secretly rejoicing at her reply that she would much prefer to do so.

And, indeed, for Madge Francillon all the joy had gone out of the evening. How she had hoped that during the dance Jack would recognise her! She blushed even now at the thought of the encouraging words she had said to him, which he had parried with a light laugh. Surely his heart must be turned to stone. Still if he had not recognised her, there was a certain amount of consolation in the fact that her Jack had not attempted to flirt with an unknown girl. She grasped at that straw of comfort.

The Monk led her to a cosy, secluded corner, and they seated themselves. Madge roused herself with an effort and looked at her companion. Who was he? she wondered. There was something about him which reminded her strangely of Jack. *What* was he saying?

"Miss Slater," he commenced, pulling off his mask; "I have been seeking for an interview with you all the evening."

Madge gasped and stared wildly at

her companion. What did it all mean? She looked away to where Charles II. was dancing—indeed, she had been following the gay figure with her eyes all the time—and again at the Monk.

There could be no doubt about it. It was *Jack* by her side. Apparently she and Amy were not the only ones who had exchanged costumes! How bewildering it all was! She blushed guiltily as the fond words she had addressed to the unknown Charles II. again recurred to her.

But Jack—how *dare* Jack seek an appointment with Amy Slater—the minx! He had been looking for her the whole evening, had he! She clenched her hands hard.

She would keep her identity secret, she resolved, and learn the extent of his villainy. Oh! what a terrible evening it had been! But what was Jack saying?

"... I have tried to see her several times, but all to no purpose; and this evening, unknown to her, we danced together—she is dressed as a Gipsy Queen, you know."

(Madge's heart bounded as the full truth dawned upon her.)

"But although I feel she must have recognised me when I ventured to speak a few words of love to her," continued her companion, "she repulsed me coldly and abruptly left me."

(Madge mentally begged her friend's pardon for her recent unjust suspicions. Amy was not a traitor after all, she joyfully admitted.)

"And so knowing the costume you were to appear in to-night," continued the Monk with delightful innocence, "I resolved to seek you out and ask for your help in the matter, as you are such a friend of Madge's."

"You *know* I love her." (Madge sighed rapturously.) "And I am sure the little girl loves me." ("She *does*," said Madge, *sotto voce*.) "Only this silly tiff occurred, and she has magnified it until it has assumed undue importance in her eyes. You will help me—

indeed, I think I might say *us*—in this matter, won't you, and will pardon me for asking this of you?"

Madge could not trust herself to speak at first, and he waited anxiously for her reply.

She temporised.

"Are you *sure* you really, *really* love her?" she said, with a degree of feeling in her voice which surprised him.

"*Love* her!" said Jack, vehemently, in a voice full of emotion, which he

tried in vain to repress. "You can't know what it means to me to see her dancing with that confounded Grenadier, and smiling at him as she is doing now!" And he glared fiercely at the perspiring Hopkins.

Then, hesitatingly: "And do you think—do you think—that she cares for me?"

"Oh! she *does*," said the Girton Girl, as she lifted her mask.

"*Madge!*" said Jack.

## THE LONELY SEA

By W. H. OGILVIE

WHITER than the Mayflower blossoms,  
 Drifted down our English lanes,  
 Are your ocean-witches' bosoms  
 And their horses' windy manes.  
 Careless moons scarce stoop to wreathe you,  
 Heedless sea birds round you fly,  
 While in dim green fields beneath you  
 Still your love-lorn mermaids lie.

Noonday makes your bright eyes glisten,  
 Sunset bids your full lips glow,  
 And you call me and I listen,  
 And again,—and I must go!  
 Borrowed from the skies above you,  
 Purple, as a queen's might be,  
 Float your rich robes; and I love you,  
 Lonely, royal, restless sea!

All day long to rocks unheeding,  
 You have told what love you knew;  
 All the long night pleading, pleading  
 While the silence answers you.  
 Bitter tales of you men fashion,  
 But they spell no wrong to me,  
 Save the throbbing human passion  
 In the heart of you, oh! sea!



## THE DIVERSIONS OF A PRINCESS

By A. CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

### III.—CHARLES DRUCE

“THE matter with Charles Druce is that he is in earnest,” said Wisdom.

“The matter with Charles Druce is that he never is anything else,” said Anne. “He has not a particle of imagination!”

“Yet, knowing how literal and serious Charles is, you showed him every sign of a deep affection. Was not that dangerous?” said Wisdom.

“But I *have* a deep affection for him,” declared Anne. “That sustained intercourse with Charles would irritate me to madness, does not prevent me from deeply appreciating Charles’s character.”

“Very ingenious, dear Anne,” said Wisdom. “But poor Charles Druce has no comprehension of the subtleties of which emotion is capable in able hands.”

“A ploughboy would not enjoy caviare as much as would an epicure, of course,” said Anne. “If I have arrived at a point where I can enjoy emotion intelligently, surely Charles should try to raise himself to my level, instead of blaming me for being better educated than himself.”

“Charles is a man with one idea in regard to women of his own station, and that is marriage,” said Wisdom, firmly. “You knew this from the beginning.”

“I have never denied that Charles’s limitations are fairly obvious,” said Anne, coldly.

“You used to refer to them as his ‘stability,’” said Wisdom. “‘Rock of strength’ I believe was the expression.”

“If Charles had remained a rock, I certainly should not have altered,” said

Anne. “My flickering affection would have played around him as long as he stood block-like, unmoved. But if the rock suddenly turn into a volcano, is it my fault if things become unrestful?”

“No; but it is foolish to play with fire when your opponent is a salamander,” said Wisdom, thoughtfully, “as poor Charles is now finding out!”

“Why ‘poor Charles,’ as if I had ill-used him?” said Anne, fighting very hard against Wisdom’s harsh edicts. “Any fire that Charles Druce is experiencing through my coldness to him is a mere earthly element compared to what he would endure if I behaved honourably, according to your teachings, and married him. You know what I am like when a person gets on my nerves. Well, when Charles coughs, my nerves come right outside my skin and quiver. They do, really! Well, just think if Charles were my husband, and he had a bad chest cold!”

“Yet how you adored him when you first saw him!” said Wisdom.

“In the smoking-room and muddy boots,” said Anne. “Quiet strength!”

“‘The embodiment of all that is manly,’ I believe you put it,” said Wisdom. “Oh, Anne, it really isn’t fair to people to be so impressionable!”

“But I didn’t know *he* was impressionable,” said Anne, pleadingly. “He looked the last man in the world to trouble his head about foolishness and women.”

“I admit the provocative attraction,” said Wisdom, drily. “But why did you wish to win him, when you don’t want him now you’ve got him?”

“I do want him,” said Anne, “as a

friend. I have a deep and temperate affection for Charles, and I should like him to have a rather deeper, perhaps, and not quite so temperate affection for me; but a friendly affection is the only sort of affection that can give either of us happiness. If Charles be so stupid that he cannot see any further than his own selfish desires of the moment, I can't help it, any more than I can help having a clever brain——"

"Which should tell you that the desires of men and women cannot be arranged to fit each other like a Chinese puzzle," said Wisdom, scathingly.

"But how can we tell that unless we've tried?" said Anne, ingenuously. "My motto is try, try again."

"If this mistake you have made with regard to Charles Druce were one by itself instead of one in a never-ending sequence, I should not blame you so severely," said Wisdom, quietly. "But you have fallen into a habit of experimenting consciously, for the pleasure of experimenting, and you must consider that other people may not be able to manage their emotions as successfully and easily as you do. It's no use telling me it is their fault for not having given sufficient attention to the subject. The fact remains that there are certain simple elemental natures whom your experiments leave maimed and hurt; and Charles will be one of these."

"Oh, let's have this out," said Anne, who well knew a heavy punishment was in store for her if Wisdom convinced her of cruelty to Charles. "You accuse me of being a selfish little beast. Well, now, I don't see why! Why isn't Charles selfish, too?"

"Charles is in earnest," said Wisdom for the hundredth time.

"Yes, but about what?" said Anne. "Charles is earnestly desiring to compass a selfish wish and marry me. Does he do this because he thinks it will conduce to *my* happiness? Not a bit of it! He is thinking of himself the whole time, and the fact that he is worrying

me dreadfully does not matter a brass farthing to him."

"Why did you show Charles that you liked him?" said Wisdom, who had a tiresome trick of repetition.

"I could not imagine that even Charles would be so stupid as to imagine a girl ever shows a man she cares for him when there is the barest possibility she may fall in love with him," said Anne, very scornful indeed. "The simple and outspoken affection I *show* to men is genuine friendliness, and that is all. But why should I be blamed for showing Charles I took pleasure in seeing him? Charles has had attentions from heaps of women, and he didn't fall in love with them."

"But when you saw that Charles was in danger of falling in love with you, you should have suppressed him quickly," said Wisdom. "You could have done so, Anne; you are rather clever at suppressing people. No! You enjoyed the excitement, and you didn't think how seriously it might end for Charles."

"Oh dear, what a life you do lead me!" said Anne. "It's not as if Charles lavished gifts and his society upon me, from unselfish motives. I took it that we afforded each other mutual entertainment; and, after all, Charles is thirty-two—quite *old*! It isn't my place to look after him. He's a free, experienced man of the world. I don't see why I should be burdened with all the responsibility of our friendship."

"Friendship between the sexes is never stationary," said Wisdom. "It advances."

"If you call it advancing," said Anne, "when an intimacy reaches the pitch where all the civilities and kindnesses of human intercourse terminate, I call that state, degeneration! At one time Charles did his best to amuse me at a party, and give me a good time. Now his sole object is to prevent me from talking to anyone else, and to make me generally miserable. As for

his hostess, or the countless friends who consider they have claims on my society, Charles views them all with hatred, which he shows by standing two feet from my elbow, and surveying the company around me with a sullen glare."

"Oh, Anne, you are heartless!" said Wisdom. "Think how poor Charles is suffering!"

"It's rather cowardly to show it, isn't it?" said Anne. "I think it shows great lack of self-respect and dignity. Just reverse the cases, Wisdom, if you please! Imagine that Charles was a fascinating-through-no-fault-of-his-own young man, and I was a solid, wealthy, respectable young woman, rather dull and apt to be unnoticed at parties. Suppose Charles in the kindness of his heart bestowed various little civil attentions upon me, welcomed my advent with a bright smile, and did not conceal a genuine pleasure in my rather heavy conversation. Well, now, suppose I fell in love with Charles and determined to win him for my husband, in spite of the fact that he showed me as kindly and tactfully as possible that he did not love me as a husband should, and further, had not the slightest desire or intention of marrying at all! Well, suppose I made up my mind that, by patience, I would wear down Charles! Suppose I followed him about at parties, hung on his every word that he addressed to other ladies, plainly showing that I regarded every word as a separate insult to myself! Suppose I snapped up my hosts and hostesses who wished to introduce me to other gentlemen! Suppose I

made my life a perfect misery, as well as everybody else's, including Charles. There would be general sympathy for Charles, I think; and as for me, I should be rightly called a 'perfect spectacle!' But because it is a man who is pursuing, and a girl who is pursued, Charles is thought a manly and shamefully-treated hero, and I am thought an inhuman little icehouse! It's so unfair!"

"You may be stronger than Charles," said Wisdom, "and better able to conceal your emotion; for that very reason you should have pity for the weak!"

"I've tried to let down Charles gently, and he won't take any hints," said Anne. "I'm very sorry, but I can never pity people who sit down and howl when they can't get what they want. If Charles had shown an ounce of pluck, it would have been different. Then my heart would have been broken, too! Think how wretched I was about Mr. Gregson!"

"You might have stopped all Charles's misery!" said Wisdom, firmly. "Indirectly you are responsible, however much you quibble!"

"Oh, all right then, I'm responsible!" said Anne. "I'm not perfect. Charles Druce will be one of the black spots of my life, one of the pages we turn over quickly and don't refer to! But as the page is there, and it is impossible to unprint it now it is printed, that is really the only wise course to pursue about it?"

"But another time," said Wisdom.

"Another time of course, I shall act quite differently!" said Anne.

But Wisdom sighed.



# THE GLASS OF GREEN CHIANTI!



By T. C. DE LEON

*Illustrations by Stephen J. Ferris*

**Q**UITE a congenial sextette of us met nightly, at the transpontine *table d'hôte*, during my last autumn in Paris.

I was painting arduously in La Batte's *atelier*, and, like many another, had my brain full of grand ideas, each one of which would make me famous—if developed.

There was an American in our party named Ward Livingstone, a New Yorker who had passed some years in Rhodesia, employed by mining syndicates.

A born talker, he had aided his lingual attribute by travel, albeit clarity of observation had been somewhat lacking; but he never confessed ignorance of place or subject. In his favourite phrase, he "knew it all." Moreover, he declined—though courteously ever—to let others know any of "it;" and his wont was to monopolize table-talk, in serene innocence of the fact that conversation can never be a monologue.

Handsome, frank, manly and well

groomed, Livingstone was a really good fellow, despite his being the butt of at least two of his messmates. These were Hon. Herbert Alton-Hume Cholmondeley Savile, ex-attaché to His Majesty's legation at Vienna, who had been granted indefinite *congé* for the health of his morals, and naturally chose Paris as their sanitarium—and Baron Strelitz de Rhadon. The latter was a small, keen-eyed, and introspective Russian, but singularly winning and magnetic in manner—when he chose. He rarely had much to say, but, on one subject, he did talk—forcibly and well. Plainly the baron had lived almost everywhere; and, as plainly, he had tested many modern fads, one of them being theosophy and occult science.

On their first meeting, he had made Savile's baby-blue eyes roll in their sockets, by reading his career from his palm and declaring blandly that he would, one day, speak on terms of perfect equality with the Czar of Russia.

On another occasion, he bade a severe and persistent cramp leave my right arm: it vanished at the touch of his firm, white hand, never to return. But theosophy was the baron's hobby; and, at flippant allusions to that most occult of all the cults, he was *à cheval* in an instant. Still, he was never long at the charge; for, somehow, his scimitar of logic and his mace of facts ever laid a rash assailant flat on his back, with heels in air. Then the magnanimous victor would promptly dismount, cast aside his arms, and throw out the white flag of deep and continuous reverie.

One evening De Rhadon was late at dinner. As he came in, Savile and I were discussing the ultimate trend of scientific research. I held that, "in the hands of men entirely great," vast preventive and remedial results slept under what laymen knew only by the cant name of charlatanism.

"Perhaps," the Englishman retorted doggedly. "But wouldn't you as lief be cured by a pill, really, as by something between a black Voodoo and Lourdes? You can at least see the pill, but you can't reach any point of the other thing, you know."

"That's right! Your head's dead level, Savile," Livingstone broke in. "Why, I've seen dead loads of that sort o' thing myself. Out among those niggers at the mines, there were Hoodoos who could give cards and spades to any Gumbo on a Louisiana plantation; but those ignoramus worshipped 'em, as our Indians do their Manitou." The Russian entered in his usual velvet-shod fashion, but the New Yorker went on: "They're fakirs, all of 'em; and there's nothing in it, unless the patient has more nerves than brains. Why, man! I'll get more results out of a grain of calomel and a seidlitz powder, than the fakirs can out of all their hypnotism, palmistry and——"

"I don't know quite about palmistry, really," Savile deprecated. "A fellow

often has deuced odd things on his hands, you know."

"Assuredly," I assented. "And my arm was cured, after all the doctors, by one touch of De Rhadon's. Feeling 'is believing,' as much as seeing proverbially is."

"Thank you for the personal part; but Science needs no champion," the Russian said quietly. He spoke to me, but his keen grey eyes were fixed on Livingstone; and for once he made no reply. In fact, he continued singularly silent and introspective throughout the whole dinner, which was a triumph for the *chef*, and a very merry meal.

"Deuced clever Chianti this, really!" Savile exclaimed suddenly. He, too, had been silent some time; but now leaned back *un homme diné*, and held his glass to the light, after sipping. "But I rather prefer the pale to the red. Purer wine, isn't it, Baschiotti?"

"They are the same precisely, save for the colour of the grape," answered our Italian messmate—a vintner and expert.

"Did you ever taste the Green Chianti?" De Rhadon asked.

"There is no such wine," Baschiotti replied, staring. "In all Tuscany, from Siena to Arezzo, there are but the red and the white."

"Perhaps; it is very rare now," the Russian persisted, suavely. "A century or two ago it was a favourite wine. I believe the Borgia and Rimini families used it, for some peculiar qualities it alone seemed to possess."

"I have drunk it!" Livingstone spoke abruptly, and for the first time since his soup. "It is a very strange wine—very strange."

The German and the Englishman exchanged knowing glances; the Italian stared blankly at the speaker.

"But, Signor Leevingstone——"

"It is—a very strange wine!" the American cut him off definitively, and then relapsed into his unusual silence.

"Who is for the opera to-night?" Baron de Rhadon asked.

"For nothing would I miss it!" Baschiotti cried. "Calvaletta will create 'The Persian,' in Bulfinchinito's new opera."

"I am invited to the legation box," Savile said, rising.

"I shall go myself," the German muttered; "but it will be light—all trill and scream, to crack the voice and the ear at once. It will not be as Wagner."

"I will join you, Baron," I said, as all rose; and, without one word, Livingstone took the Russian's arm, while Baschiotti and I followed.

I had read of "The Persian" for weeks, and had longed for the opening night of the world-famous contralto. Yet—just as we turned into the Boulevard des Italiens—a sudden and dominant craze seized me to rush home and paint. A grand grouping for my picture—"Before the Terror"—suddenly rushed clear and sharp to my brain. I had vainly groped for some of its details for many weeks; now the whole was clear, and blotted out every other desire.

With some mumbled excuse—and an invitation to drop in and smoke after the opera—I dropped Baschiotti's arm and rushed to my studio, taking the steep flight *au quatrième* three steps at a bound.

Where was my key? Not in the outer coat pocket that always held it. Search of all others failed; so, yelling for the *concierge*, I finally got in, sprung the night-latch behind me, and seized my crayon. Soon I was lost in architecture, faces and costumes, that crowded the canvas so fast, and in such naturalness, as to make me stare at my own prowess. At last I stepped back, smiling at a really remarkable and life-like composition; lit my Turkish pipe, and lay back to admire it, in my easiest chair.

My figures seemed to glide across the polished floor, that reflected every shimmer of silk and gem; the candlelabra to flare, and the *frou-frou* of brocades to soothe the ear.

"A great picture!" I cried aloud. "'Before the Terror' is fame and fortune at one great stroke!"

\* \* \* \* \*

How long I had slept I know not, when a hot and heavy hand touched my own, and I saw Livingstone standing before me. His face was not the smug, complacent one familiar to our mess, but deadly pale, with blood-shot eyes and matted hair pushed back from a furrowed and beaded forehead.

"I have had one!" he said, in cold, metallic tone.

"One what?" I queried, staring in his face.

"One glass of that—Green Chianti! I lied at dinner to-night. I had never even heard of the cursed thing before! And if I ever touch another—why, man, I'd sooner drink vitriol!"

I still stared at him. He evidently had "had one," but not of Chianti—green or other coloured. But then I recalled his great physique and his exceptional prowess as "a holder," and his speech was clear and deliberate.

Suddenly I glanced at the door, which was still closed.

"Did my *concierge* let you in?"

"I tell you that wine is bewitched!" He ignored my query and dropped heavily into a chair. "It changed everything so suddenly, so horribly that—God! she was a beauty: such arms and neck! And the music of her voice. I shall never see her again—never!"

"Why not? Come, brace up, man!"

I marvelled, naturally, at this strange effect of a new opera and a new tipple, for Calvaletta was to sing thrice weekly.

"Such eyes, and such a bust! No wonder those artists raved to paint her! And at her age, too! She must be over ninety!"

Now I began to understand: my friend was drunk—probably absinthe. He rose, taking the floor with firm, steady strides, but noting neither my questions, nor my surprise, as he went



on, in that dull monotone. And this, in brief, was his story :—

When the Russian, Livingstone, and Baschiotti had reached the Place de l'Opéra, the American fell a pace behind the others, to make way for a lady. Then he felt a light touch on his sleeve, from a taper, but firm, hand that flashed with gems. The face, as he caught it in the dim street, was marvellously beautiful, with a something in its wonderful eyes that held his own and penetrated his whole being. The figure was wrapped in a long, trailing cloak of rich but peculiar brocade, the hood concealing all the woman's head, save the high, patrician features. And the man noted that the white satin slippers, peeping from the folds of the cloak, were wholly unsmirched by mire of the streets.

With no word spoken, the little hand reached to his lapel and deftly inserted a fresh and delicate *fleur-de-lis*. Then its finger moved to the straight, red lips; and—her seductive eyes still burning into his—the woman turned and moved swiftly down the Place toward the Boulevard des Capucins.

Livingstone was young, adventurous, and an American. Without saying, it goes that he followed close behind the gliding mystery in brocade; all thought of his companions lost in his determination to solve the puzzle set for him. For—curious, eager and excited as he was—no doubt arose that his strange guide was a lady of position. Her pose of head, her sinuous grace of movement, the still tingling command in her touch upon his arm, all proclaimed this.

But what could mean her wordless accost—the strange decoration that fluttered on his coat in the night breeze?

And whither—and for what—was she leading him? For they had passed the street of the Capucins—the Rue de la Paix, and were skirting the garden of the Tuilleries, the gliding guide not halting at the *Pont Neuf*. From that, the man merely glanced away at the Louvre; but a vague surprise struck

him at its thousands of brilliant, coloured lights—as though some grand reg function were enacting within it.

Gradually the way grew narrower and more twisted; the antique building more imposing, but more grey. Livingstone—familiar as he was with Paris—felt himself in a strange city; yet he knew that he must be in the very heart of that former home of the high *noblesse*, the Faubourg St. Germain.

The leading motion of the woman ceased under the ponderous stone shield of an antique *porte-cochère*. For one instant the full glory of her face was turned, tingling him to his finger tips, as her head revealed the crown of ruddy hair upon her regal head. But again the slim finger went to her lip, in warning, as she whispered :—

"Here! This door to the right. Your flower will pass the *concierge*."

How she had vanished he knew not, but Livingstone was standing alone—bareheaded in the now driving mist.

Was he really awake?

He glanced at the flower on his lapel, then at the solid old door. Its plate of battered old brass bore no name, only the number—13!

For one instant only, superstition halted him. The next the ponderous door swung wide; a grey and stately but richly liveried lackey bowed low, in welcome, and the American strode into a lofty and spacious vestibule, where mighty candelabra shed equal light and hot wax upon the floor.

The subdued hum of many voices floated from the *portière* of an apartment beyond. Next instant it was drawn aside, as the ancient servitor announced :

"Monsieur le Prince Varde de Livingstone, de l'Empire des Etats Unis!"

Through the arch of the drawn curtain the New Yorker beheld a great domed salon, with superb frescoes that glowed under hundreds of wax candles in silver sconces. These showed also the rich, but strange, costumes of a



"HERE, THIS DOOR TO THE RIGHT. YOUR FLOWER WILL PASS THE CONCIERGE."



goodly company, the ladies gowned in long-trailing robes of costly fabrics.

The visitor pinched himself, then rubbed his eyes. That enticing array of sculptured arms and gleaming necks, sparkled with countless wealth of jewel and gem; but the costumes were all of another age—even the men wearing powdered wigs and silken hose, and jewelled garter and buckle.

The strangely bidden guest stood dazed and bewildered beneath the *portière*, trying to comprehend. Plainly this was a fancy ball, but of no ordinary class. Yet, why was he invited—unknown, and a foreigner; not even speaking their tongue?

Pshaw! His beautiful guide would soon explain her courtly jest. But none of the patched, rouged faces before him recalled her pure and classic one; and further search was checked by a soft voice of a stately dame, who approached him, in a blaze of rubies and opals. It answered his thought—how he had been selected for such compliment, and if his name were known, for the lady said, most graciously, in purest French:—

"Monsieur le Prince needs no introducer among us, since his great-grand-sire was here with Monsieur Franklin, and his grandsire was aide to M. le Général de Lafayette. An instant, Monsieur le Duc, permit me to present you to le Prince de Livingstone, grand descendant of an old intimate of your own! Now, Monsieur, I present to you le Marquis le Beauteemps! Comte, I introduce you to our American prince, who represents—to us—the youngest of the empires! Ah! Monsieur le Prince, this is Madame la Vicomtesse de Nulle—and this la Princess de Bellegarde! Monsieur!"—she curtsied low before a fleshy gentleman, with heavy mouth and a Roman nose—"he has come; this is le Prince Livingstone!"

And, so, leading him through the glittering and gracious throng, his hostess mentioned many names that, somehow, seemed strangely familiar to

his ears. Yet it never troubled Livingstone that all the conversation was in French.

Each introduction was received with a wide-sweeping curtesy, or a deep and stately inclination of the back; but the guest noticed—with some annoyance—that never once did the eyes of man or woman leave his own, and that every salutation left the head stiffly erect, as though most sedulously balanced.

Little adept as he was in the language of courts and of Racine, the American's national and personal assurance rose to the occasion, and he smiled at himself approvingly, on hearing his own voice in accent and idiom, that had graced the court of *le grand monarque*! But ever his furtive eyes sought that pair which had lured him hither. And suddenly she stood before him—her face grave, but tender, her lily-broidered gown but accentuating the curves of the most perfect form the man had ever beheld.

But what struck him as so marvellous was the satin of the woman's skin—generously displayed by her gown, and the chiselled curves of wrist and arm and shoulder—slim but soft, and just suggesting dimples. And her hair, massed about a perfect head in sleek and gleaming coils, crowned her facile queen of all the titled throng about her.

Young, lissome, but regal, the girl wore but one jewel: a *fleur-de-lis* in blue enamel, with a great diamond as its dewdrop. This hung from a band of bright crimson velvet, close clasping her slender throat. And then, for the first time, Livingstone noted that the gems of all the ladies—the world-famed orders and crosses of all the men—fell from similar necklets—all of the same bright hue.

Instinctively his hand went to his own stiff collar to feel if this badge of membership had come to him, unknown, as the hostess paused before the girl and said:—

"Last, though far from least, Monsieur le Prince, I present you to my niece,



sole heiress of our house, Mademoiselle Victoire de la Bèrgerois. She must replace me, called by duties elsewhere. But, Monsieur, Henriette de la Bèrgerois again assures of welcome beneath her roof, one who is, who must be, with us!"

Comprehending the words, but not the meaning of her speech, Livingstone made no reply, but the strange events that led him to his present strange surroundings, fused into something yet more seductive in the wonderful glow that went straight to his heart from the eyes of the younger woman. Even his assurance fled, leaving him as bashful and palpitant as any village bumpkin; and he realised only the thrill of her touch upon his sleeve, and the velvety purr of the voice that said:—

"The heat and the perfumes are oppressive here. Let me show you my aunt's pride—her conservatory."

Presently the pair were beneath a nodding palm that made twilight about the richly carved garden seat, upon the very edge of which the American balanced himself, although Mademoiselle de la Bèrgerois left ample space beside her. But she looked, not at him, but straight before her into space, as she said:—

"Perhaps you have not divined the joy—the ecstasy!—it gives me that you came, Mr. Livingstone," and oddly enough she was now speaking pure English, and with no accent. "Your great-grandfather and Mr. Silas Deane were both suitors for Aunt Henriette's hand; and General Livingstone made such a pet of me! Ah! what a difference it had made if aunt had married an American!"

Slowly and sadly her hand toyed with the *fleur-de-lis* at her throat,



"DRINK, TOO, OF THE GREEN CHIANTI, AND BE WITH US—FOR EVER!"

and its diamond dewdrop flashed blindly into the hearer's eyes—as her words on his brain. But he only stammered:—

"Marry—ah—um—an American?"

"Yes—perhaps. But who can tell? Well, we two were not exactly strangers, were we? And, oh, I admire your country so much! It is so vast, so far-reaching, and so tenacious! Its latest government more than delights us; it means everything to us and to our cause!"

"Our—cause?" the man stammered, parrot-like.

"Yes; for it is—ours! The new empire of the United North America shall

never see the sun set on that flag, which no man will ever dare to tear down! And—you are—with us!"

"With you? Why, Miss Bèrgerois, ain't I a man—an American? You seem to know my family—even a little better than I do myself, so you can't believe I'd disgrace their record! 'With you?' Why, I'd just feel it heaven to be with you—for ever!"

"For ever!" The girl's eyes were again strained before her, as a somnambulist's. She spoke as though to herself, and the shadow of her thought—whatever it might be—swept her grand face and made of it a glory. "For ever!—and for life—and death!"

"For life—and for death! For ever!" the man repeated eagerly, and he edged a trifle nearer the still form beside him.

"I knew you would," she murmured absently. Then she was silent until the stillness bore down and oppressed the man, who could not think of words to say. More than once he saw her lips form words he could not hear, until, at last, pent-up thought found vent in one great, tremulous sigh.

It made the man start with some nameless dread; it made the *fleur-de-lis* upon that fairest bosom rise and fall as a yacht upon a troubled sea; it shook the ruddy masses of shining hair until they rustled. Then, in spasmodic anxiety, Victoire de la Bèrgerois raised both hands and pressed her temples firmly. And there was piteous obsecration in the eyes she fixed on space, as she murmured low:—

"Not yet! Oh! not yet!"

"'Not yet'? Why not? The grinding motto of my people is: 'No time like the present.' Ah! Miss Victoire, you yourself said it was happiness to you for me to be near—to be with you! Say you will let me be with you—always! This is sudden, I know; and somehow I don't quite understand it myself; but we Americans all learn pretty quickly. Come, let's go to your aunt, and any reference she wants——"

As he spoke he clasped the little hand hanging listless by her side. It was satiny, but cold to his hot palm. The girl made no motion to withdraw it, her eyes still fixed on the unseen something straight before them. But a little spasm of pain crossed her face as she once more murmured:—

"Not—oh, not yet!"

And as she spoke the aged servitor stood before them. The dim light of the conservatory made him look thinner and his hair more sparse and grey. His features seemed wrinkled and pinched, and the brave laces of his faded livery unravelled and rusty. On a massive silver salver he bore a quaint and gold-encrusted wine-glass.

Again the girl pressed her palms firmly to her blue-veined temples. Then they dropped softly to her lap, as she resumed her quiet tone and said:—

"So soon, Antoine? Is it indeed the hour for the Green Chianti?"

"Indeed, yes, Mademoiselle," the servitor answered in quavering voice. "Madame's clock points to the third minute before twelve!"

As a queen, the girl arose. Equal courtesy and command were in the voice that said—again in English:—

"Monsieur le Prince de Livingstone, I pledge the past! I drink to our pact! Drink, too, of the Green Chianti, and be with us—for ever!"

"Were it poison!" the youth cried; and seizing the glass which she barely touched to her lips and proffered, he drained it in one breath.

Through every nerve and vein and artery the strange potency of the green fluid coursed. His brain throbbed, his heart beat audibly, his muscles grew tense. A roaring, as of surf, in his ears almost drowned her now shrill cry:—

"Hasten! Only two minutes, new found one, before we two must part—for to-night!"

The little hand that clasped his seemed endowed with electric power. It hurried





"A SA MAJESTÉ, LE ROI!"



him resistlessly through the now dark conservatory—under dim arches—to the entrance *portière*.

The grand salon was misty and damp; the wax candles all burned down, and guttering in their sconces. Under the *portière* stood Madame de la Bèrgerois, grand and grave; a glass of Green Chianti in her hand. Around the walls were ranged the late glittering throng; all their drawn faces turned to her; in each right hand a glass of deep green wine. The soft, sweet chime of the great clock told the first stroke of twelve.

At the tenth chime, the hostess raised her glass; every other hand following hers—every voice, in hollow chorus, echoing her pledge:—

*"A sa majesté, le Roi!"*

At first tremor of the twelfth stroke every candle went out in its socket; but, in their dying glimmer, Livingstone saw all that goodly company raise careful hands.

Each one removed his head—placed it gracefully beneath his left arm—and, with the curtsy of a queen, Madame removed her own!

Aghast—the blood in his veins ice—his tongue palsied—the man glanced toward his charmer. She was making him the grand curtsy—her head in her hands!

From the great diamond, on its crimson band, an icy ray shot to his heart. He fell lifeless to the floor; his last recollection, the pressure of a hand upon

his brow—the thundering crash upon his brain of one word:—

"Remember!"

\* \* \* \* \*

The measured monotone of my visitor ceased.

He dropped again into his chair; his eyes seeking my composition—"Before the Terror."

Mine followed them, and rooted there. Was I, too, mad—stark, staring mad?

Quick feet sounded without: the Russian entered, followed by Baschiotto.

"Too late for the promised cigar," De Rhadon said quietly; "but I stepped in to return your key, which Livingstone there abstracted from your pocket, and then left in your latch outside."

"I—remember!" the accused party said, gravely.

I only stared from one to the other, so De Rhadon went on:—

"Show Baschiotti your design for 'After the Terror.' Clever conception that, is it not? The costumes and faces—the sal<sup>on</sup> and even the candelabra, all exact. But, *mon ami*, you manage to keep their heads on, in spite of the Guillotine!"

"And you know—?" I began.

"Certainly; all about it. So does Baschiotti. I told him while we supped at Beaujolais'. Livingstone left us after the opera. He came to tell you that I had hypnotised you both! He will never call Science a 'fakir' again, after his first—and only—glass of Green Chianti!"





## IN A WESTERN RIVIERA

### A JAMAICAN SNAP-SHOT

By NANCY MASSON

*Photographs by the Jamaica Camera Exchange*

AS the first grey lights lifted it might have been early morning in any land. The same fleeting shadows chase each other before the dawn, whether you watch them from the heights of Ben Lomond, from the ever blue waters of Lac Leman, or as we did now, from the deck of the steamer lying at anchor alongside Port Royal out from Kingston, the premier port of Jamaica. But as they rolled back from the bulwarks, and faded away in pale apricot strands, which turned orange and red as the sun rose up and the cocoanut palms grew definite in the vagueness beyond, and the crimson shingled houses of the port took shape in the far away, there was no question

that the mysterious lights ushered in a tropical day. The sheer audacity of colouring was wonderfully alluring, and instantly we gave ourselves over to the bewitching indolence of the distant palm groves, where the trees suffered the saffron lights to filter through their feathery leaves.

Brighter and more insistent with every moment of the wakening day grew the bands of light dashed across the sky, as though painted there by an artist's bold brush, while every porthole of the motionless ship was tinged with the crimson reflection, emphasised in shimmering strands in the calm water. The perfect stillness was perhaps the most beautiful part of this beautiful picture—



our ship but an intruder on the dark blue sea that seemed still asleep. Close to her the white sides of the *Urgent*, which diligently stands on guard off the coast, with awning up and no sign of life on her decks, lazily fitted in with the spirit of the tranquil scene. On our starboard side the Pallisadoes stretched away to the mainland, in places flat like an Eastern picture, in others thick with foliage and palms circling still lagoons—everything typical of “rest and peace and all the flower of dreams.”

The anchor up, we steamed leisurely along, making for Kingston, which we could just distinguish, and were careless to discover while we could watch the lights changing still on the nearer hills and on the beautiful Blue Mountains beyond. To call them “blue” is no prejudiced fancy. Blue as indigo—and purple and green, yet mostly blue

—an indescribable colour, just such a mountain blue as the Swiss Dent du Midi assumes on a still summer’s afternoon.

Kingston lay before us, seemingly the oddest and most delightful muddle of architecture that the mind could conjure up. Shades of saffron and red struggled for supremacy, and just where one hue seemed to get the upper hand a clump of bamboo or a straggling palm would thrust in its green head to break pleasantly the monotony. Everything was imbued with the same impressive sense of contented laziness. The boat gliding to its berth at the quay, the blue waters beyond, the cloudless sky, and the unflinching sun—all were in harmony.

Beyond the crowds of coolie boys on the quay and the knots of people who gathered to greet us by the Custom



ON THE ROAD TO CONSTANT SPRING.





A TYPICAL JAMAICAN SCENE.

House sheds, we caught our first glimpse of a bullock waggon, which—the eight dusty, yellowish cattle harnessed for their load—fitted in so well with other details of the picture that it might have been set there purposely to complete our first island impression.

The gangway down, the Customs through, we climbed into the smartest buggy procurable, not much impressed with the build of the Jamaican horse. His sturdiness and wiriness we had yet to appreciate. Kingston harbour approach is much as other harbour approaches, but once outside in the open, where the hot sun flared down on the dusty roads—almost deserted at that early hour of Sunday morning—interest and amusement were awakened and sustained by the quaint though shuttered shops. Beside a modern emporium, green painted and inscribed above with Roman letters of gold, was a tumble-

down native bakery (little more than a hole in the wall), or a Jamaican public-house with saffron walls and red, green, and white shutters, over which the beautiful white coralilla grew, and a bamboo palm or a banana clump threw refreshing shadow. At a break in the hedge of flaming hybiscus would be a few dwelling houses with strangely coloured walls and irregular steps leading to each gate.

Once in the main road, the picturesque element subsided. The lines of the electric car seemed to meet in the distance of a well-built road, flanked by pretentious business premises and modern English-looking shops. Soon we were in the courtyard of Myrtle Bank Hotel, past the lovely Royal palm which guards the gate and plays proud sentinel in a plot where pink English roses and crotons, lilies and scarlet pointsettias grow in the wildest profusion.



A PICKNIE SCHOOL.

The verandahs at Myrtle Bank look over the harbour, across which the welcome morning breeze, locally known as the "Doctor," was beginning to blow, making the tall palms nod to its pleasure, and rustling the bamboo leaves, and the hedges and bushes of flowers blooming their short day's life. Sipping iced kola and cocoanut milk under the canvas awning, watching the coolie boy glide among the ferns to water them, looking out across the still lagoon to Port Royal, till the attention was arrested by the passing of a green and purple lizard, an hour's perfect contentment slipped by all too quickly before we started the second stage of our six-miles journey.

We wondered then, and wonder still, if ever electric car whirled its passengers through such alluring scenes as does the Kingston tram to Constant Spring. Through the town—resting in Sunday quietness—past native huts in the out-

skirts, separated by prickly cactus hedges, or toppling up against each other like old friends for comfort, past big houses almost hidden beneath creeper-grown verandahs in well-timbered enclosures, we glided out to the free country road, where only the steel rails bore testimony to man's interference and—incidentally—enterprise.

By the roadside, almost brushing the car as it passed, was a tangle of ferns, with convolvuli and wild orchids and fronds of maidenhair, the beautiful green banana plant and the strands of the feathery bamboo, and a thousand other plants and ferns, all struggling for supremacy beneath the cotton tree, the tree of woman's tongues and its clattering pods, and mango, tamarind, the cassia berry, and even orange trees.

In less than half-an-hour we were at the lodge gates of spacious Constant Spring, making our way to the front by a trellised harbour-of magenta and



apricot-coloured flowers. Scarcely were we inside before the sun clouded over, and the tropical rain clattered down on the shingle roof. But in half-an-hour the storm was past. The thin mists rolled back to join the clouds which were resting above the blue hills beyond. When the sun came out again lizards and chameleons darted across the gravelled walks, while impudent banana birds with their yellow breasts, and long-tailed humming-birds balanced their dainty forms on bamboo twigs.

A hurried breakfast of grape-fruit—deliciously flavoured with sugar and port wine—coffee, rolls, and guava jelly, preceded a drive of ten minutes, and we were in time to join in the harvest thanksgiving service in a native church.

Fortunately, we arrived before the choir, which consisted of eight very solid, coloured damsels, one tenor, and the organist (or rather harmoniumist)—evidently a lady of distinction, for she wore a hat with a lot of trimming, and her hair was long enough to coil around her head. The solitary tenor, in immaculate white duck suit, preserved an enviable placidity, and faced the row of white-gowned damsels with a look of supreme contentment, evidently prepared to beam at the slightest provocation. In front of us was a row of delightfully typical "picknics" fresh from the weekly wash and brush. Every

Sunday their hair is taken out of the stiff, torturous plaits, is fiercely brushed, and at night rebound. It may not be two inches long, but it must be woven into a dozen plaits, arranged in a symmetrical design and decorated with brilliant ornaments. One conspicuous damsel, about eight, wore a white sailor

hat emblazoned with the Royal monogram, with a black chenille spotted veil gracefully draped around the brim, and a dress of thin muslin, through the transparent sleeves and yoke of which her skin shone like ebony. In her ears she had heavy silver rings,



THREE RASCALS.

while a gigantic horseshoe of brilliants and rubies surmounted a cluster of the queer little plaits which confined her frizzy black hair.

Into the tiny whitewashed chapel (on the walls of which a highly-coloured portrait of the King and Queen was conspicuous) trooped the congregation in muslins and cottons of every conceivable colour. The women, as is their invariable custom, had their skirts hitched up and bunched round their hips, and all were wearing their best ribbons. If there was an inch of room left anywhere it was utilised to show off some favourite bow, quite irrespective of any colour scheme. It was the jumble of native and European ideas which proved the most amusing feature of the dress, both of men and women.

One or two adhered strictly to the



brightly-coloured cotton gowns and head-dresses, and this was always picturesque. But it was sad to see the effect spoilt, as it was in one case, by the addition of a white chip hat trimmed with a wreath of violets and leaves, towering above an orange and green scarf quaintly knotted around the head.

Picknies with bare feet, picknies in brown shoes or black boots, in sailor suits of serge and linen, in *khal'i*, one even in velvet, all spotlessly clean and devoutly following the service, except when engaged in rolling their big eyes and grinning broadly at the tourist ladies, sang the hymns at the top of their musical voices, recited the responses, fidgeted through the sermon with their finery and their bangles, and afterwards trudged contentedly homeward along the sun-baked roads.

Forty minutes' ride and we were 1,500 feet above the sea level, where the ocean breeze blows across the mounds where, we were told, are buried relics of weapons and utensils of the aboriginal tribes of the Arawak Indians. In the fascinating shade of the ever green trees it was easy to conjure up stories of that other race of beings who once lived and loved there beneath the same sun that rolled over our heads. Of the Indian hunter who pursued his vocation under the same moon which lures on the fireflies. Of the Indian lover who wooed his dusky mate by the wigwam blaze. They knew not the God of Revelation. But the God of the Universe they acknowledged in everything around,

and bent in humble, though blind, adoration. How odd it was to think that it was only a fortnight since we said good-bye to the gaunt, leafless trees of Avonmouth and the grey November fogs which hid either shore of the Severn Sea; and yet, that same Sunday, the day of our arrival in sunshine and summer, the snow was settling on the Devon hills at home, and the cold fogs, following the frost, bound London in its thralldom. No wonder then, when the days are creeping in in dreary England, the mind turns longingly to the remembrance of days spent in that little island of our Western Riviera, where hospitality is understood and practised with a generosity exceeding even English notions.

The rest of a day's exquisite pleasure we spent lying in hammocks in the shade of a verandah favoured by a breeze, noting the colours changing on the hills, across fair stretches of palm-grown land out to the sea beyond, watching the butterflies flitting among the tropical flowers; the pleasure intensified by a knowledge that nothing was expected of the dreamer—that no near duty called for attention. Thus was our first Jamaican Sunday spent in the fair enclosures of Constant Spring. When night came with its cool air, it was pleasant to stroll by the fountain where the inquisitive chameleons lurked and where the fireflies gathered in their purple, blue, and gold splendour, making carnival and acting as memory's missionaries in that fair garden.

## A BIRTHDAY JEST

By BASSETT HASTINGS

THERE was a rustle of silken skirts, the tap of a tiny heel across the parquet floor, and Cousin Flo sank gracefully into the rocker I had drawn for her by the drawing-room fireside. The faintest possible suggestion of Parma violets reached me simultaneously with her first words.

"Well, boy, what is it?"

Flo can be very cutting when she chooses.

I'm afraid I flushed up a trifle resentfully. I know that I don't look my age. It's the worst of leading a healthy outdoor life. It keeps people so beastly boyish looking. At the same time, that is no reason why they should be taunted with the fact, especially when they can't hit back. I couldn't hit back. At least I didn't want to just then; for I had come upon a most momentous errand, and was by no means so sure of my ground that I could afford to run any risks.

I glanced at Flo. She was coolly swinging herself to and fro in the rocker, her mischievous eyes lazily regarding me from beneath their drooping lids, whilst the faintest suspicion of a half mocking smile lurked in the dimples of her pretty mouth. A more seasoned suitor might have felt encouraged to proceed. But somehow I didn't. I suppose I lacked seasoning. Whilst I hesitated—

"For the second time of asking, boy, what is it?" she cried.

This time the tones betrayed the least suspicion of impatience.

I took heart of grace.

"For the twenty-second time of asking, Flo, your birthday having come round—"

"I don't think it at all in good taste to remind a lady of her increasing years,

even though she has the misfortune to be related to you," she interrupted severely, bringing her heels floorwards with a vicious little click.

I humbly apologised. Somehow or other it is never any use trying to take a rise out of Cousin Flo. She either raises your blood to boiling point with cutting repartee, or freezes it by standing upon her dignity. In neither case do you get much "forrarder."

"Of course," she added, resuming her rocking, "I suppose I must make myself quite clear. Some people are so very dense, you know"—I bowed—"I don't blame you for coming round to wish me many happy returns of the day. On the contrary, I think it's rather nice of you to trouble about such an insignificant event. The fault lies in your manner of carrying it out. Your intentions, boy, are excellent: your execution is—well—abominable."

She paused to pull a cotton off her gown.

Then she continued in a milder tone: "I really wonder sometimes, Bob, that you don't cultivate these little things more. They are so essential in the education of a young gentleman"—I winced—"I wonder you don't make a study of them. Why don't you take lessons?"

"If only you would be my teacher," I murmured, conscious that for once I hadn't done so badly.

"H'm!" said Flo sweetly. "You're getting on. Sometimes, my dear Bob—only very rarely, you understand—your mother wit seems positively on the point of scintillating. Then the clouds of conventionalism roll once more across your limited horizon, and all is dark. What little originality you have is shut out, like the London sun behind the London fog."



My triumph had been short-lived.

I repressed a lively inclination toward vulgar warmth, and she proceeded.

"Taking one thing with another, Bob, I think perhaps it would be only charitable, not to say cousinly on my part, were I to personally conduct your instruction. That is, of course, provided I thought that my humble services were sufficiently appreciated and fittingly remunerated."

"My fund of appreciation, fair cousin, is colossal, far out-weighting, in fact, any more material funds in my possession. I greatly fear that the exceedingly small monetary inducement I could offer would be quite inadequate to tempt a lady of so much 'culchaw' as, say—yourself."

"That's just like a man," she retorted contemptuously; "always thinking of finance."

I laughed—I fear rather cynically.

"It would be interesting to see how womankind would fare if man consented to give up his much-abused prerogative of conducting the family finances," I replied, rather more drily perhaps than is my wont.

But Flo apprehended thin ice.

"We're getting away from the point," she said shortly. "I was suggesting that I might give you a few hints on practical sociology, the remuneration to be to my own satisfaction, when you interrupted with your absurd offer of pounds, shillings, and pence. Just as if"—a very scornful accent here—"I should be likely to ask money for teaching a man manners. Upon my honour, Mr. Bellingham, you have a very skim-milk opinion of your cousin."

"Indeed, I have not, Flo. I am constantly preparing the creamiest of compliments for your edification. Then, just at the crucial moment, you shoot a single acid little sentence into the midst of them, and before I know where I am, out they come, all curdled."

At that she laughed right out, a merry peal of infectious merriment.

"Bless the lad!" she cried, half to herself, half to me. "Why will the gods deny him decent discernment? Why cannot he see that so long as Flo Preston suspects prepared compliments, Flo Preston will as surely prepare counter blasts? Why can't he be his natural, stupid self?"

"Suppose you give me a few of those promised hints," I suggested.

"Come, now, that's good. Shows a humble spirit at starting. Where do you want me to begin?" she asked, resettling herself amongst the rocker cushions.

This was a bit of a poser. It is one thing to admit general incapacity. It's a comfortable sort of—all embracing sort of—confession, like the Litany. It is quite another matter to sort out one's shortcomings individually. That is too searching to be comfortable. You feel like the thief in the haystack when they prodded for him with pitchforks. You never know from moment to moment where you'll puncture next.

Then I had an inspiration.

"Suppose," I said, "only supposing, mind—suppose I wanted to give someone of whom I thought a great deal a little present. How should I go to work?"

"Lady or gentleman?"

"Lady."

Flo looked interested.

"Young or old?" she asked.

"Decidedly young."

Flo bit her lip, and made a gallant attempt to appear disinterested.

"Good-looking?" she queried.

"Well, that is hardly a fair question," I objected, beginning as it were to feel my feet. "Looks, you know, Flo, are such a matter of opinion. Personally I think her the most beautiful woman in the world; but I have heard other people call her quite commonplace."

"The spiteful huss——"

She stopped dead in the middle of her sentence, the picture of sweet confusion.

"I beg your pardon. I do not think I have mentioned the lady's name yet,"

I said, grimly conscious that this was jabbing it in with a vengeance.

"I beg yours. I was—that is—I'm afraid I was thinking of something else," faltered the usually self-possessed young lady, her heightened colour betraying the obvious quibble as soon as uttered.

I smiled. It was beginning to be my turn—and I felt that I could afford to.

Then her *amour propre* came to her rescue, and she was suddenly acid.

"Am I to infer, Cousin Bob, that you have condescended to honour this—this decidedly young lady with your affections?" she asked, with the air of one who inquires the price of washing soda.

I answered her in like vein.

"I don't think that point need affect our present deliberations," I said. "What I really want to know is how I ought to make this presentation. Just for the sake of illustration, let us pretend that you are the lady and that, to use your own acidulated simile, I have condescended to honour you with my affections."

The lady sniffed her disapprobation.

"Now, please, how am I to proceed?"

The lady sniffed a second time.

"I am waiting, please, Cousin Flo."

I really believe she would have sniffed thrice had not a sudden idea struck her. Intuitively I guessed its purport, before she opened her mouth. She meant to brazen it out.

She started well.

"Dear Miss Preston, I should esteem it a great honour if you would accept this little gift," I repeated, at her dictation. "It's only a small thing, and quite unworthy of you, I know. But if you would consent to overlook the intrinsic value, and treasure it, if only a little, for the feelings which prompt the offering, I should be more than grateful to you."

She paused.

"By the way, what is the nature of the present?" she asked.

"Does that matter?" I said, unconcernedly.

"Yes, I think so. You see you might choose your next words accordingly. If it were a brooch, for instance, you might ask permission to pin it in place, or——"

"If it were a ring?" I suggested.

"Oh, then"—was it my fancy, or did she catch her breath?"—"in that case I suppose you would settle matters in your own way," she replied faintly, rising as if to end our interview.

She looked very beautiful as she faced me, her colour coming and going, and only the quick throbbing of her shapely bosom to tell of the tumult within. Her eyes, those wondrous windows of a woman's soul, were veiled by her downcast lashes. Her lips told me nothing. And yet—I understood.

"Bear with me a moment longer, little girl," I said. "The pupil has yet to receive his most important lesson. Let me complete the presentation in my own clumsy fashion. Then, when it is all over, you shall criticise it to your heart's content."

"As you will," she murmured.

I took her cold little hand.

"Flo, dear, I want you to wear this ring for me, if you will," I whispered. "It's a very paltry thing, I know, and perhaps it doesn't signify very much—only the love of a bit of a boy you know. But it is the best I have, and I cannot give you more than that. Let me put it on for you——"

She drew her hand hurriedly away and burst into tears.

"Oh, it is cruel of you, Bob, to mock me so!" she cried, making as though to brush past me.

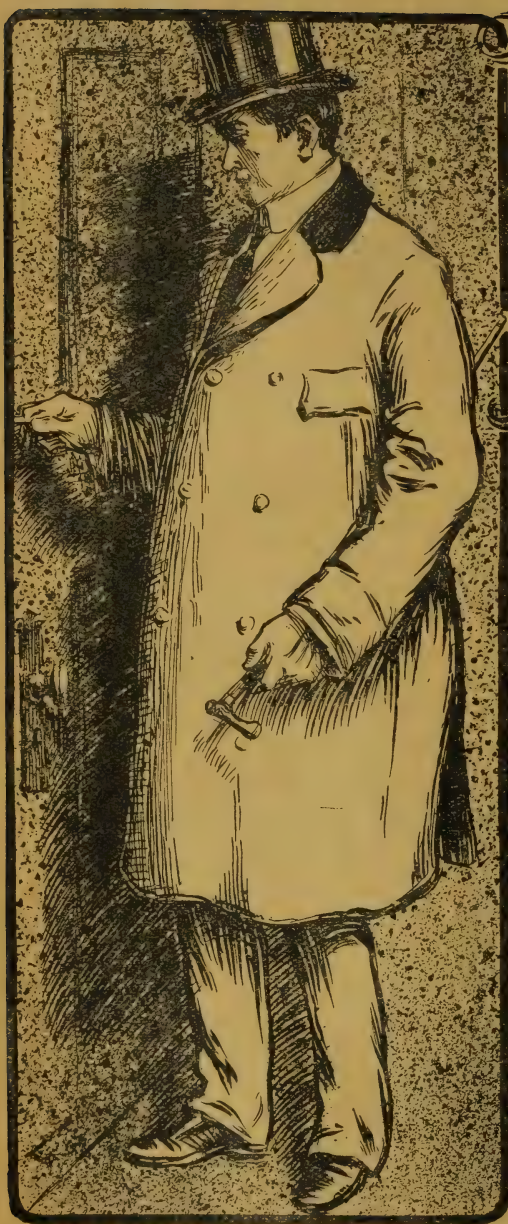
In a moment I had drawn her to me.

"Mock you, my darling! God forbid that I should mock you, little girl! I mean it, every word of it, if only you will wear it for me for ever."

She said nothing in reply—she was just too amazed.

Then she just smiled at me through her tears and—put up her little third finger.





"LET HIMSELF IN WITH HIS LATCH-KEY."

## THE TURN OF THE WHEEL

By MARION WARD

It would have been difficult to find throughout all the world a more absolutely happy man than young Boyd Lewison as he swung gaily home to his chambers on that frosty December evening.

Young, good-looking, clever, possessed of a considerable amount of this world's goods, he had scarcely known a care in all his free, favoured young life. And to-night the climax of all his hopes had come, and Margaret Lonsdale, heiress and beauty, of one of the oldest and proudest houses in England, had promised to be his wife.

He swung along home, treading on air, his handsome boyish face—that was quite unspoiled by all Life's lavish outpouring of gifts—aglow with joy, and his broad shoulders erect and squared.

He reached his own door, and, whistling gaily beneath his breath, let himself in with his latch-key.

His man met him in the hall.

"There's a gentleman upstairs waiting to see you, sir," he told him.

"All right, Smithers," replied Boyd, airily, and flew upstairs three steps at a time, singing a catchy music-hall refrain at the top of his voice.

Ensnconed in a comfortable arm-chair before the fire sat an old man

of no particular class, rather shabby, yet not in the least like a tradesman, with white whiskers, and deep-set, cunning little blue eyes.

"Good evening!" remarked Boyd, tentatively.

"Good evening!" replied the stranger.

There was a little pause, each man eyeing the other furtively.

It was rather surprising to find a total stranger calmly in possession, for apparently no reason, and with apparently no intention of moving; but Boyd felt at peace with all the world that night, so merely smiled pleasantly and waited.

The old man seemed nervous. He cleared his throat several times before he spoke. But at length he broke the silence.

"You are—Boyd Stephen Lewison?" he said, more as one stating a fact than as though requiring an answer.

Boyd bowed.

The old man rose from his chair and began pacing up and down the room.

"Poor boy—poor boy!" he murmured to himself. "Perhaps, after all, I had better keep silence."

Boyd's equanimity remained unruffled. "Sir?" he suggested.

The old man turned and looked at him.

"You are very happy?" he said sadly.

Boyd laughed joyously.

"Very," he agreed, serenely.

"Do you feel strong enough to receive a blow?" asked the old man earnestly and unexpectedly.

Boyd looked astonished.

"A blow?" he repeated, vaguely.

The old man came and stood facing him, close to him.

"What do you know about your father?" he asked slowly, in a low meaning tone.

For the first time Boyd experienced an uncomfortable chill. Who was this mysterious old man? And what *did* he know about his father? He tried to think. Nothing beyond the fact that he had gone out to Australia while he (Boyd) was a mere baby, and had died out there a year or so after.

He raised his head a little haughtily.

"I beg your pardon?" he suggested, lifting his eyebrows slightly.

"I asked you," repeated the old man, apparently unconscious of any snub,

"what do you know about your father? Believe me, it is from no idle curiosity that I ask. "Do you—consider him—dead?"

The voice and manner were so earnest and absolutely unconscious of any cause for offence that, in spite of himself, Boyd was impressed.

"Certainly he is dead," he replied sharply. "He died twenty years ago or more."

The old man groaned, and sat down suddenly, covering his eyes with his hand.

"They told you that—they told you that?" he murmured brokenly.

Boyd watched him with a vague but growing apprehension. But, with true British dislike of showing any feeling, his face was perfectly cold and composed as he replied:—

"They told me—the truth, naturally."

The old man looked up fiercely.

"They told you a lie—a dastardly, useless, wicked lie!" he declaimed, passionately.

Boyd paled beneath his tan. He set his lips firmly.

"Sir!" he said stiffly.

"My God! it is true. He did not die—he is not dead yet." He was a convict, and they hid it from you, and told you a string of purposeless, wicked lies! A convict—a forger—sentenced to twenty years, which good conduct curtailed to eighteen! My poor boy—my poor boy!" and he hid his face again in both hands, his shoulders heaving.

Boyd's face was ashy pale. He laughed harshly.

"What tissue of lies is this?" he said sternly.

The old man got up. He came and stood before Boyd again, his small eyes filled with a strange light.

"Your name," he said, in a strange, solemn voice, "is Boyd Stephen Lewison. Mine—is—Charles Boyd Lewison!"

There was a pregnant pause. Boyd took a deep breath and squared his shoulders boyishly.



"Your proof?" he inquired coldly.

The stranger groaned again.

"Is that all the greeting my son vouchsafes to his father?" he said, in a broken voice.

"Did you expect me to fall on your neck, and hail the sudden entrance of a convict father with delight?" asked Boyd, cruelly.

The old man collapsed into his chair again, rocking himself to and fro as though in pain.

"No—no," he muttered. "I suppose it is only natural. I might have known—have guessed— But I forgot! In all these weary, dragging years my one idea has been to see your face again—to that end I worked and slaved without complaint to gain that longed-for but dearly-bought two years' grace. And in my absorption in the thought of release, I forgot all it might mean to you . . . Forgive me, Boyd!"—stretching out trembling hands—"forgive me, and call me 'Father'!"

He looked very old and feeble sitting there, and Boyd's heart smote him for his cruelty.

"How can I tell?" he said hoarsely. "How can you prove you *are* my father?"

"There is a mark like a small starfish on my left shoulder—the heritage of the Lewisons for generations. Would that convince you? More, on my thigh is a scar six inches long that I received twenty-one years back, saving you from the fire that broke out in the Manor. Look at me! True, you were only three years old when I was sentenced, but is there no faintest stirring of recollection, or have these ghastly years altered me beyond recognition?"

It was true—true! Boyd felt and knew that it was true. That star—the insignia of the Lewison family from time immemorable—and that awful fire which was still the talk of Shropshire. He scrutinised the eager, old, unprepossessing figure, and deep down at the back of his mind the wasted features

grew. Yes, he remembered them now. He groaned, and put his hand suddenly over his eyes.

"Forgive me," he said huskily, "and give me time. Go to bed now as my guest, and to-morrow we will smooth it all out."

He touched the bell before the other could stop him.

"But you believe?" cried the old man, anxiously.

"I believe," replied Boyd, heavily.

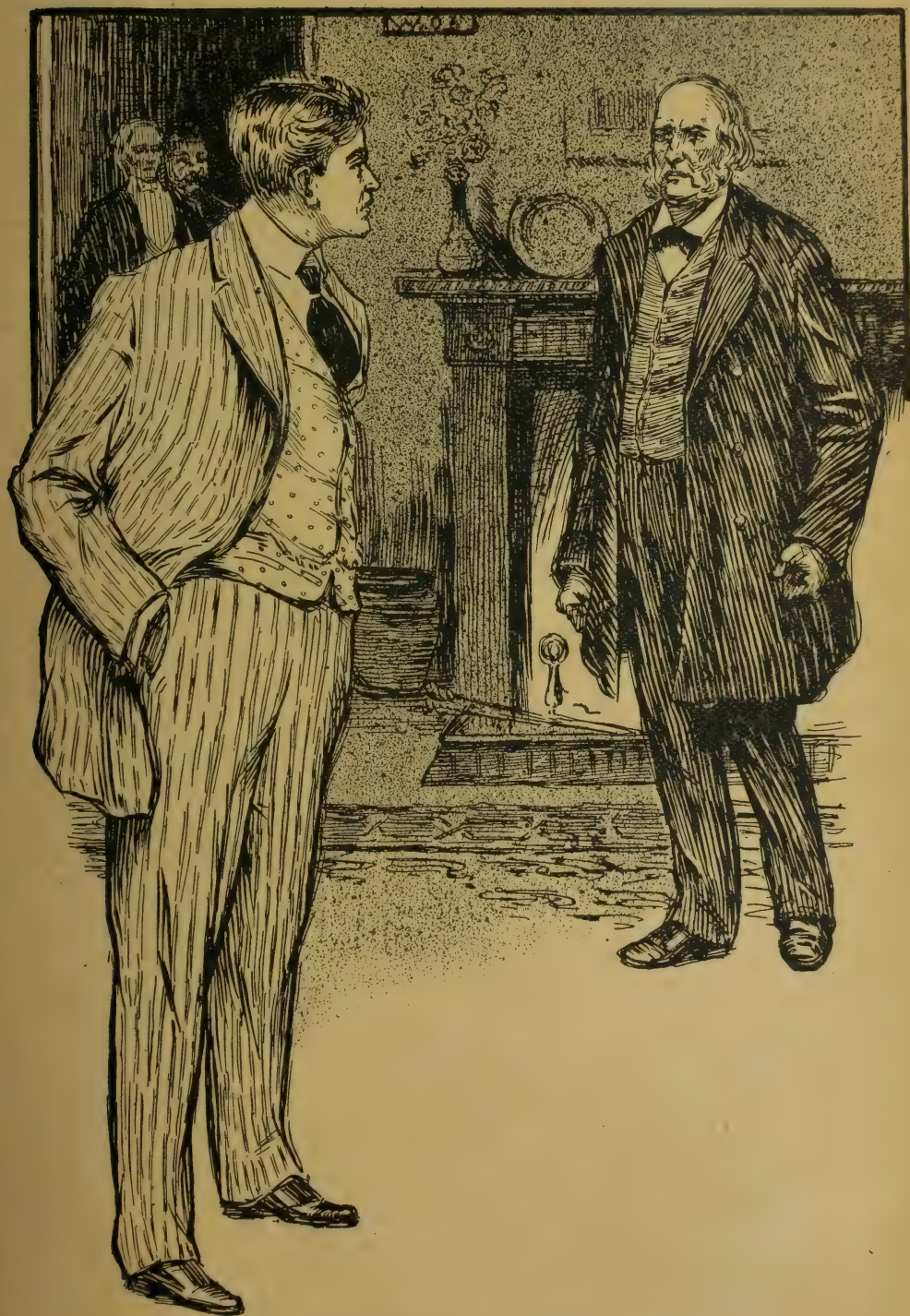
The door opened, and his man came in.

"Show this gentleman into the guest chamber, Smithers," he ordered, in the same toneless voice, "and see that he has everything he may require. Sir, I wish you good-night."

The old man looked at him and half held out his hand. Boyd turned hastily away, pretending to look for something on the mantel-shelf. The outstretched hand dropped limply, and with bowed head the stranger followed the manservant from the room.

Left alone, Boyd flung off all restraint. Flinging himself into a chair, he rested his elbows on the table, both hands pressed to his throbbing temples, and tried to think. His brain felt numbed and paralysed, and he had a general sore feeling all over, as though from physical buffeting. What did it mean—what did it entail—this awful thing that had come upon him? He knew it was true—he had not the slightest doubt as to the veracity of the old man's story, and he tried to think what effect it would have on life in general. Ruin—ruin—ruin! Even if the ghastly secret were hidden from all the world, there was one who must know, and that one she whom he loved best in all the world. Yes, that is what it meant. All was over between them for ever and ever.

He sprang to his feet, his face white and working, and his eyes dark and strained with pain, and strode up and down the room like a caged beast, his hands clenching and unclenching at his sides.



"THE OLD MAN ROSE WITH A SUDDEN ASSUMPTION OF DIGNITY."



What had he done? What sin had he committed that this terrible thing had been allowed to come to pass? He had thought himself so happy—the most fortunate man on this earth—but one short hour ago. And now—now there was not a beggar in the street with whom he would not change places gladly.

"The proud old name of Lewison." Margaret had said that laughing, teasing him for his family pride that very evening. Margaret—Margaret—Margaret, whom he might never see again! The irony of fate! He laughed heart-brokenly, and, flinging himself in his chair again, hid his face on his arms.

All night long he wrestled with his pain and did not go to bed, and morning light found him pale and haggard but calm and collected.

Margaret must know at once that all was over; and proud old Lord Lonsdale too—he must explain everything fully and unvarnishedly to him.

He writhed at the thought. Nevertheless he sat down then and there and wrote both letters—writing swiftly, coldly, not daring to pause to think, and sealed them up to be despatched as soon as anyone was stirring.

Then he sought his room, and flinging himself, dressed as he was, upon the bed, fell into a restless and broken doze.

The next day was a nightmare. Washed, shaved, and properly groomed, the old man presented a more respectable appearance, and minute by minute his features grew more familiar to the eyes of his tortured son.

"Yes, I remember you," Boyd told him coldly, "dimly—but sufficiently to be assured that what you say is true. And now, now that you have come home and disclosed yourself, what do you mean to do?"

The old man had lost all his diffidence once his identity was an established fact. He was brisk and cheerful, loquacious even, and to one not stricken

down by a mortal blow, would have proved a most entertaining companion.

Boyd looked at him with his haggard young eyes, and shivered to see how lightly his degradation sat on him. Was this the haughty, aristocratic Charles Lewison he had never been tired of hearing his nurse talk about, when he was a child? What a liar she must have been. And how eighteen years of prison life stamps and deteriorates a man. He felt a positive repugnance to that smiling unconcerned face opposite. His father!—and a convict! He groaned and tried wretchedly to turn it into a cough. He felt that another hour of his misery would drive him mad, and he had a whole life-time to look forward to.

Mr. Lewison helped himself to another kidney, using his own knife and fork. Boyd winced sensitively.

"What do you mean, what do I intend to do?" asked the other casually.

"I mean what I said," replied Boyd, hardly. "What do you propose doing?"

His father looked quite blank.

"Doing?" he echoed vaguely.

"I suppose you see it is quite impossible for us to stay in England?" said Boyd, harshly.

"Oh!" The other's face fell. He looked at the stern young face deprecatingly. "What do you propose?" he asked, weakly.

Boyd lost his self-control. "I think the best thing for both of us would be to go straight to the devil!" he cried, desperately. Then he pulled himself up with an effort.

"I beg your pardon," he said, wearily; "I had a bad night and am not quite myself this morning. Will you excuse me if I retire to the smoking-room and try to get a nap?"

"Certainly, certainly," acquiesced the old man, eagerly. "Pray don't let me be a restraint upon you in any way, my dear sir."

A restraint upon him! Safe in the smoking-room, Boyd began his restless pacing once more. It was more than



"THE GREY, SHINING EYES RESTED TENDERLY FOR A MOMENT ON 'THAT' BOWED HEAD."



he could bear. His whole life shattered by one unprepossessing, common old man! The wild thought flashed through him of utterly denying and repudiating the claim. But he put it from him instantly with his British honour. Did he not recognise him himself? And was not the hall-mark of the Lewison family printed on his left arm? No, he must bear it as best he could. At least, he could refuse to live in the same house with him. His every little act and lapse from the manners of society got on his nerves horribly. He felt that before a month was up he would want to murder him. No, they must live apart—so much was certain. For the rest, what did it matter? What did anything matter now? His father—and a convict!

As the day wore on Mr. Lewison, senior, grew more and more hilarious. His diffidence and shame seemed to drop from him like a cloak, and the more moody and savage Boyd became, the higher his spirits seemed to rise. The answer to the morning's letter had come from Lord Lonsdale—a kind, commiserating letter, breathing sincere sorrow and sympathy from every line; recognising, of course, that everything was over between the young fellow and his daughter, but honestly regretting and deploring the terrible necessity.

No word or message from Margaret. Boyd swore that was only as it should be, and what he had expected. Nevertheless, there was an added shadow round his eyes and mouth, and he wandered about more restlessly than before. He wondered drearily how long it took for such a life to kill a man.

"My dear boy, don't look so glum," expostulated Lewison, senior, playfully. "After all, it's only one of life's little ironies. For my sake, I think you might strive to be a little more cheerful, and not look as though you were attending a funeral."

Boyd turned upon him.

"What is it but a funeral?" he ex-

claimed, bitterly. "The cremation of all life's hopes, joys, and ambitions, and to you belongs the credit not only of building the pyre, but of setting the match for the conflagration."

The old man rose with a sudden assumption of dignity.

"I will not brook being insulted by my own son——" he began, displeasedly.

The door opened suddenly.

"A gentleman to see you—important, sir," announced Smithers, in a peculiar voice, and in marched a short, thick-set individual with shrewd little eyes and a good-tempered, bulldog type of face.

He touched his hat respectfully to Boyd, then turned quickly to the old man.

"So there you are," he remarked grimly.

The old man smiled sweetly.

"I have been expecting you for some time," he observed nonchalantly. "Meanwhile my son, Mr. Boyd Lewison"—with an airy wave of his hand—"has most kindly given me shelter."

Boyd looked from one to the other in bewilderment. The newcomer saw the glance and grinned comprehendingly. Then he touched his brow significantly.

"Escaped three days ago—bin searching for him ever since," he explained in lower tones.

Boyd's brain reeled.

"My—my father!" he gasped.

The man grinned again, sympathetically this time.

"That bin his little game this time?" he said, admiringly. "He's the cutest, sanest old loony that ever I had to do with. Told a whole string o' sensible lies I suppose, sir?"

Boyd sat down. His throat felt dry and parched. There was a singing in his ears.

"Who—is—he?" he uttered harshly and unnaturally.

"Mr. Charles Boyd Lewison!" struck in the silent listener promptly.

The man grinned.

"Sam Bones, one-time butler at

your late father's place in Shropshire, sir," he said respectfully. "For the past fourteen years an inmate of Colney Hatch—and a pretty lively inmate too, cuss him!" He turned to the unconcerned watcher. "Come along, you," he said gruffly, "and don't you try to play any more o' your little tricks. Good-day to you, sir—apologising for the trouble he's giv' you." And, taking firm hold of his captive's arm, keeper and maniac left the room, and drove off in the waiting cab.

Boyd stared dazedly at the door. His whole mind felt unhinged by the terrible experiences of the last two days. But gradually the glorious truth crept over him. It was all a lie—a lie—a ghastly dream—a delusion—the horrible invention of a maniac.

And utterly overcome and unstrung—still only half able to realise his escape, he hid his face in both hands and was still.

For ten seconds the silence was unbroken, then there was a slight creak outside, the door was pushed open gently, and a girl's face, beautiful, and glowing with emotion appeared.

The grey, shining eyes rested tenderly for a moment on that bowed head, then, with a soft swish of silken skirts she was across the room and leaning over his shoulder, both arms round his neck and her fresh cheek pressed against his.

"Boyd, Boyd—oh, my poor boy!" whispered a sweet, half-laughing, half-crying voice, "how could you be so cruel? Father has cut me off with a shilling and the family denounced me, but a thousand convict fathers should not make me give you up. Will you have me dearest, penniless and outlawed, or will you too cast me off?"

It falls rarely to the lot of man in a life-time to taste the fulness of joy Boyd Lewison experienced in that moment.

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## DAY AND NIGHT

By B. TABB

COULD day demand a gift of night,  
 And night the boon bestow,  
 'Twould be that heaven of star-delight  
 Where dreams departed go.

Could night the gift demand, and day  
 The benefit confer,  
 'Twould be, upon the twilight way,  
 A lengthened hour with her.



## THE CHRISTMAS LOG

### A MANUSCRIPT COLLECTOR'S STORY

By ANATOLE FRANCE

*December 24th, 1890.*

I HAD put on my slippers and dressing-gown. A cheerful fire burned in my study. On the window-panes crystals of ice, shaped like ferns, hid from view the Seine, its bridges, and the Louvre des Valois.

I drew my sofa and small table near the hearth, occupying by the fire such space as Hamilcar deigned to leave me. Hamilcar, curled into a ball, dozed on a feather cushion; at my approach he purred, half opened his eyes, then closed them, thinking: "It is nothing; it is my friend."

I opened a book which I perused with interest, for it was a catalogue of manuscripts. I do not know of any reading easier or more absorbing than a catalogue. Just as I was beginning to enjoy this one, my servant, in a sullen tone, said M. Coccoz wished to speak to me.

Someone had, indeed, followed her into the library. It was a poor, forlorn little man wearing a thin coat. He came toward me smiling and making a quantity of bows. When I saw him I thought of a wounded squirrel. He carried under one arm a package, which he put on a chair, then, opening it, he disclosed a number of small yellow books.

"Monsieur," said he, "I have not the honour to be known to you. I am a book agent, Monsieur, and I take the liberty of offering you some novelties."

Great heavens! Just gods! What novelties were offered me by the manikin Coccoz. The first volume he put into my hand was the History of the Tower of Nesle.

"This is an historical work," said he with a smile, "a true book of history."

"In that case," I replied, "it is very tiresome, for histories which do not lie are always dull. I write true ones myself, and if you carried them from door to door you probably would never find a cook ill-advised enough to buy one."

"Indeed, Monsieur!" politely answered the little man.

Then, smiling, he offered me the Loves of Heloise and Abelard, but I made him understand that at my age I had no use for love stories.

Still smiling, he produced Rules for Games, bezique, whist, écarte, chess and dominoes.

When I shook my head he suggested Tricks for Social Evenings, containing directions for turning a white rose red.

I told him I had long ago ceased to have anything to do with roses. Thereupon, with his last smile, the manikin made a last attempt.

"Here," said he, "is the Key of Dreams, explaining every dream possible—the dream of gold, the dream of thieves, the dream of death, the dream of falling from a height—it is complete."

"Yes, my friend," said I, "but all those dreams and many others unite in one, the dream of life, and will your little yellow book give me the key of that?"

"Yes, Monsieur," answered the manikin. "The book is complete and not dear—one franc twenty-five centimes, Monsieur."

I called my servant, for there are no bells in my apartment.

"Thérèse," said I, "M. Coccoz, whom I will ask you to show out, has a book which may interest you; it is the Key of Dreams. I shall be happy to give it to you."

"Monsieur," she replied, "I have no time for dreaming," and so saying, she began to tie up the books.

The manikin Coccoz smiled no more and his face assumed such an expression of suffering that I regretted having rallied so unhappy a man. I called him back and told him that I had caught a glimpse of the Story of Estelle and Némorin, and would like to buy it at a reasonable price.

"I will sell you the book for one franc twenty-five centimes, Monsieur," answered Coccoz, his face beaming with joy.

When he and his package had disappeared, I asked my servant from whence had fallen that poor little man.

"Fallen is the word," she replied; "he fell from the attic, Monsieur, where he lives with his wife."

"He has a wife, do you say, Thérèse? That is marvellous! Women are strange creatures. This one must be a miserable, forlorn little woman."

"I do not know what she is, Monsieur, but I see her every day dragging over the staircase long silk dresses, spotted with grease; and her eyes shine. Now, I ask you, do those eyes and those dresses become a woman taken into the house out of charity? For they have allowed them to occupy the garret while the roof is being mended, because the husband is ill and the wife in an interesting condition. The concierge has told me that she is even now being confined. Much need they have of a child!"

"Thérèse," I answered, "doubtless they did not need one, but nature has enticed them into her trap. Let us pity and not blame them. As to the silk gowns, every young woman loves them. But, tell me, have they what is necessary in their garret?"

"Well, there are holes in the roof, the rain and the snow come in, and they have neither linen nor furniture."

"That is very sad, Thérèse—but, tell me, is not your soup on the fire?"

"Yes, Monsieur, and it is time for me to go and skim it."

"Very well, Thérèse, do not fail to take from the pot a good bowl of bouillon, and carry it to our neighbour, Madame Coccoz."

My servant was leaving the room when I added:—

"And, Thérèse, first of all, call your friend, the porter, and tell him to get from our box a good armful of wood which he must take to the Coccoz garret. Then charge him to add to his pile a big log—a real Christmas log. As to the manikin, if he returns, I beg that you will shut the door on him and all his yellow books."

Having completed these little arrangements, with the refined egotism of an old bachelor, I returned to my catalogue.

With what surprise, what emotion, I read this item, which I cannot copy without a trembling hand:—

"The Golden Legend of Jacques de Genes (Jacques de Voragine), French translation. This manuscript of the fourteenth century comprises in addition to the translation of Jacques de Voragine's celebrated work: First, the 'Legends of the Saints Ferruton, Germain, Vincent and Droctovée'; second, a poem on the 'Miraculous Interment of Monsieur Saint Germain d'Auxerre.' This translation, these legends, and this poem are due to the clerk Alexandre."

"The manuscript is on vellum. It contains a great number of illuminated letters and two miniatures finely executed, but in a bad state of preservation; one represents the Purification of the Virgin, the other the Crowning of Proserpine."

What a discovery! Beads of perspiration stood on my forehead, and my eyes were covered by a mist. I trembled and, unable to speak, could hardly refrain from shouting: "What a treasure!" For forty years I had been studying Christian Gaul, and especially the glorious abbey of Saint Germain-des-Prés. Now, in spite of the descrip-



tion's culpable insufficiency, it was evident to me that the clerk Alexandre's manuscript had come from the great abbey. Everything proved it, and the legend of Saint Droctovée was particularly significant, for it was that of the first abbot of my beloved abbey.

"But why?" I said to myself, "why have I learned that this precious manuscript exists, if I am never to possess it, never to see it? I would seek it in the burning heart of Africa, or amid the ice of the Pole if I knew where it was. But I do not know. I do not know whether it is kept under a triple lock by some jealous bibliomaniac, or if it is mouldering in the garret of an ignorant person. I shudder at the thought that its torn-out leaves may cover the preserve jars of some house-keeper."

*August 30th, 1891.*

I met on the staircase a young woman who was bareheaded; she sang, her eyes and her teeth shone. She was certainly a neighbour. In her arms she held a child, a little boy, naked like the son of a goddess. He sucked his thumb and looked at me with wide-opened eyes. The mother also looked at me; she stopped, blushed, and held out the little creature.

"Monsieur," said she, "is not my little boy pretty?"

She took his hand, put it on his lips, then moved towards me the tiny pink fingers, saying:—

"Baby, blow a kiss to Monsieur."

And folding the little creature in her arms, she vanished into a corridor, which, judging from its odour, must have led to a kitchen.

I entered my apartment.

"Thérèse, who is the young mother whom I have just met on the staircase carrying a pretty little boy?"

Thérèse informed me that it was Madame Coccoz, recalling to my mind the little man who had sold me a book on Christmas Eve.

"How is he?" I asked.

I was told that I would not see him again. The manikin had been buried shortly after his child was born.

"But, Thérèse," I inquired, "has Madame Coccoz all she needs?"

"You would be very foolish, Monsieur," replied my servant, "to interest yourself in that creature. They have given her notice to quit, now that the roof has been repaired; but, in spite of the proprietor and the concierge, she stays. I think she has bewitched both of them. She will leave her garret when she is ready, Monsieur, but she will leave it in a carriage."

Thérèse reflected a moment, then pronounced these words:—

"A pretty face is a curse from heaven."

"I ought to be thankful to heaven then," I rejoined. "But take my hat and cane, Thérèse. I wish, by way of recreation, to read a few pages of Moréri."

*May 7th, 1892.*

The winter has passed, and the swallows of the Quai Malaquais have found me much as they left me. Nothing has enabled me to forget the manuscript for which, ever since learning of its existence, I have longed.

And in a strange way the Coccoz family is associated in my mind with the clerk Alexandre.

"Thérèse," said I throwing myself on my sofa, "tell me if the young Coccoz is well and if he has his first teeth; also give me my slippers."

"He must have them, Monsieur," answered Thérèse, "but I have not seen them. On the first day of spring the mother and child disappeared, leaving all their goods and chattels behind. She has had visitors latterly, and I am quite sure she has not gone into a convent. I always told you she would come to a bad end."

"Thérèse," I replied, "that young woman has not ended either ill or well. Wait until her life is over before you judge her. Madame Coccoz, whom I

once met on the stairs, appeared to love her child. That is to her credit."

"Oh, as to that, Monsieur, the baby lacked nothing, and she sang to him all day long."

*July 8th, 1893.*

Having learned that the pavement of the Virgin's chapel at Saint Germain-des-Prés was being relaid, I visited the church in hopes of finding that some inscriptions might have been uncovered by the workmen. I was not disappointed. The architect kindly showed me a stone previously concealed. I kneeled to decipher the lettering, and I read the following words, which made my heart beat:—

"Here lies Alexandre, monk of this church, who caused to be covered with silver the chin of Saint Vincent and of Saint Amant, also the foot of Innocens, who was during his lifetime always holy and valiant. Pray for his soul."

"It is he! It is Alexandre!" I cried at the top of my lungs. Yes, there was no doubt—the translator of the Golden Legend, the author of the lives of Saints Germain, Vincent, Ferréol, Ferruton, and Droctovée, was, as I had thought, a monk of Saint Germain-des-Prés. And what a good monk, pious and generous! He had given two silver chins and a silver foot, in order that precious remains might be covered by an incorruptible envelope. But if I am never to see his work, this new discovery can but add to my regrets.

*August 20th, 1901.*

For nine years I have not written a line in this journal, but to-day an extraordinary event took place. I received from Florence a catalogue of manuscripts. I read it. I uttered a cry. Hamilcar, who had become solemn with age, looked at me reproachfully.

In the joy of my discovery I felt the need of a confidant, and it was to Hamilcar I addressed myself.

"No, Hamilcar, no," said I, "the quiet to which you aspire is incompatible with the work of this life. Listen

to what I read in this catalogue, and then say if this is a time for repose:—

"The Golden Legend of Jacques de Voragine; French translation of the fourteenth century by the clerk Alexandre. Superb manuscript, ornamented by two miniatures representing the Purification of the Virgin and the Crowning of Proserpine. Following the Golden Legend are the lives of the Saints Ferréol, Ferruton, Germain, and Droctovée.

"This precious manuscript, which formed part of Sir Thomas Raleigh's collection, is now in the possession of M. Micael-Angelo Polizzi, of Girgenti."

"Do you understand, Hamilcar? The manuscript of the clerk Alexandre is in Sicily, in the possession of Micael-Angelo Polizzi. I will write to him."

That is what I did immediately.

"Monsieur! Monsieur! Where are you going without your hat," cried Thérèse, running after me down the stairs, my hat in her hand.

"I am going to post a letter, Thérèse."

"Great heaven! In that way, bare-headed like a crazy man!"

"I am crazy, Thérèse, but who is not? Give me my hat."

*October 10th, 1901.*

My servant this morning handed me M. Polizzi's reply, which I had awaited with the utmost impatience. It said:—

"Illustrissime Seigneur,—I do, in fact, possess the incomparable manuscript of the Golden Legend which has not escaped your lucid attention, but I cannot part from it for a single day, no not for a single moment. It would, however, be a joy and a glory to exhibit it to you in my humble dwelling at Girgenti, which would be embellished and illuminated by your presence. It is, then, ardently and impatiently hoping for your arrival, that I venture to sign myself your humble and devoted servant,

"MICAEL-ANGELO POLIZZI,

"Wine Merchant and Archæologist of Girgenti, Sicily."

"Very well! I will go to Sicily!"



October 25th, 1901.

My resolution taken and my arrangements made, it only remained to inform my servant. To these pages I will confess that I am afraid of Thérèse. I know that she knows that I am weak, and that robs me of all courage in my encounters with her. These encounters are frequent, and I always yield.

But it was absolutely necessary to announce my departure. She came into the library with an armful of wood. I watched her while she kneeled before the grate to lay the fire. I do not know how I found the courage, but I did not hesitate; in an easy tone I said:—

"By the way, Thérèse, I am going to Sicily."

Having spoken, in terror I awaited her reply. She was silent and did not show the least emotion, continuing to crumple her newspapers. Really, thought I, that woman has no heart. She lets me go without even saying "Ah!" Has she no affection for her old master?

But at last she replied: "Very well, Monsieur, go, but be home at six o'clock. We have to-day for dinner a dish which cannot stand."

NAPLES, November 10th, 1901.

I am at Naples. How I reached here with some mutilated remains of my luggage I cannot tell, for the reason that I do not know. I travelled in a state of perpetual bewilderment. This evening, wishing to observe the manners of the populace, I went to the Strada di Porto. All about me were animated groups, but I felt strangely lonely. Also I was distressed at not being able to understand a word of what was said. For a philologist it was a humiliating experience. I was then most unhappy, when a few words uttered behind me made me prick up my ears.

"That old man is certainly French, Dimitri. He looks so ill at ease. Shall I speak to him? He has a good-natured round back; don't you think so, Dimitri?"

That was said in French by a woman's

voice. At first it was disagreeable to hear myself called an old man. Is one old at sixty-two? Only the other day my colleague, Perrot d'Avrignac, was complimenting me upon my youth. And my back is round, she said. Ah! ah! I had some suspicion of it.

Turning, I saw a very pretty woman, dark and small.

"Madame," said I, bowing, "excuse my involuntary indiscretion. I overheard what you said. You wish to render a service to an old man. That is done, Madame; the mere sound of a French voice has given me a pleasure for which I thank you."

"It is late," she answered. "Do you not wish to get back to your hotel, which is probably close to ours, or perhaps it is the same?"

"Madame," I answered, "I do not know the hour, because my watch has been stolen; but I shall be glad to return to the Hotel de Gênes, in company with such kind compatriots."

So saying, I bowed again to the lady, and to her companion, who was a silent and grave colossus.

After walking a few steps with them I learned, among other things, that they were the Prince and Princess Trépof, and that they had been making the tour of the world in order to collect match-boxes.

The lady must have taken some pleasure in my conversation, for she offered me a place in her carriage next day to visit the grotto of Pausilippo and the tomb of Virgil. She insisted that she had seen me somewhere, but she did not know if it were in Stockholm or in Canton. In the first case, I was a distinguished professor of geology; in the second, I was a travelling agent for groceries, whom she had found most agreeable.

"No, Madame," I replied, "I am neither one nor the other. I have passed my life with books and have never travelled; I am a member of the Institute."

"You are a member of the Institute ! That is charming. You must write something in my album. Do you know Chinese ? I should like you to write in Chinese or in Persian. Dimitri, do you hear ? Monsieur is a member of the Institute, and has passed his life with books."

The Prince nodded.

"Monsieur," said I, trying to draw him into the conversation, "without doubt one learns something in books, but one learns much more travelling, and I regret not having, like you, explored the world. I have lived in the same house for thirty years."

"In the same house for thirty years ? Is that possible ?" cried Madame Trépof.

"Yes, Madame," I said. "It is true that the house stands on the bank of the Seine, in the most illustrious and beautiful spot in the world. From my windows I see the Tuileries and the Louvre, the Pont-Neuf, the towers of Notre Dame, the turrets of the Palais de Justice and the spire of the Sainte Chapelle. All those stones speak to me ; they tell me stories of the times of Saint Louis, of the Valois, of Henri IV. and of Louis XIV. I understand them and love them."

"Where do you live ?" brusquely asked Madame Trépof.

"On the Quai Malaquais, Madame, and my name is Bonnard."

This revelation, unimportant as it was, produced on Madame Trépof an extraordinary effect. She turned her back and seized her husband's arm.

"Come, Dimitri," she said, "hurry ; I am horribly tired and you make no progress. We shall never get there. As to you, Monsieur, your way is there."

She waved towards an obscure alley, pushed her husband in the opposite direction, and, without turning her head, cried :—

"Good-bye, Monsieur. We shall not go to Pausilippo to-morrow, nor the day after. I have a terrible headache, terrible !"

I remained bewildered, wondering how I had offended Princess Trépof. I was lost and apparently condemned to look all night for my hotel. I walked blindly ahead and at last, completely discouraged, sat down to rest on a stone bench, where I inwardly cursed the whims of Madame Trépof.

"Good evening, Signor, have you been to San Carlo ?"

I lifted my head and recognised my host. I was seated in front of my hotel, directly under my own window.

MONTE-ALLEGRO,

*November 29th, 1901.*

We were resting, I, my guides, and their mules, on our way to Girgenti, at the inn of the little village of Monte-Allegro. As I sat in the public room two persons entered, whom, after a little hesitation, I saw to be Monsieur and Madame Trépof.

She called for a glass of iced water, which her host offered with a flourish.

I was not in haste to present myself to this lady who had so abruptly deserted me in Naples ; but she detected me in my corner, and a frown informed me that the meeting was disagreeable to her.

However, after she had swallowed a mouthful of water, either her mood changed or she took compassion on my solitude, for she approached me.

"Good morning, Monsieur Bonnard," she said ; "how are you ? How strange to meet you again in this awful country !"

"This country is not awful, Madame," I replied. "Beauty is so great and august a thing that centuries of barbarism cannot quite efface it. The majesty of Ceres still hovers over these arid valleys, and the Greek muse who told the story of Arethusa's transformation even now sings to my ears upon the bare mountain and in the dried-up spring. Yes, Madame, when our uninhabited globe revolves in space like the moon, the soil which bears the ruins of Selinus will still, amid the universal death, preserve an imprint of beauty, and then at least



there will exist no frivolous lips to blaspheme its solitary grandeurs."

I was conscious that these words were beyond the understanding of the pretty little empty head which listened. But a man who, like myself, has passed his life with books, cannot always adapt his conversation to his hearers. Besides, I was not sorry to give Madame Trépof a lesson in respect. She received it so submissively and with such apparent intelligence that I added as amiably as I could :—

"I cannot feel sure that the chance which has brought us together is a happy one. The other day at Naples you appeared suddenly to weary of my society, and I fear that my unpleasing exterior caused my disgrace, as I had then the honour to see you for the first time in my life."

These words seemed to afford her an inexplicable delight. She smiled most graciously, holding out a hand to which I touched my lips.

"Monsieur Bonnard," she said impulsively, "do not refuse a seat in my carriage. You will talk to me about antiquities, and that will amuse me very much. We also are going to Girgenti. I will tell you why. You know my husband collects match-boxes. We bought thirteen hundred at Marseilles. But we have heard that there is a manufactory at Girgenti, the products of which are not to be found except in the city and its environs. Well, we are going to Girgenti to buy match-boxes. Dimitri already owns five thousand two hundred and fourteen different kinds. Some of them have given us great trouble to procure. Next summer we are going to Sweden to complete the collection. Is that not so, Dimitri?"

When we were about to leave the inn, Madame Trépof glanced at her husband, who was talking to the host, then leaned towards me and said in a low tone :—

"Dimitri and I, we are bored to death, do you know. Match-boxes still

remain to us. But soon our collection will be complete, and what shall we do then?"

"Ah! Madame," said I, touched by the moral misery of this beautiful person, "if you had a child you would know what to do. The aim of your life would be plain, and your thoughts would be graver and more consoling."

"I have a son," she replied. "He is not yet ten years old, and he is bored—he also, my little Georges. It is terrible!"

Again she looked at her husband, now superintending the harnessing of the mules; then she asked me if in the last ten years anything had changed on the Quai Malaquais. She declared that she never passed there because it was too far.

"Too far from Monte-Allegro?" I asked.

"Oh! no, too far from the Champs-Élysées, where we have a house." Then she murmured as if to herself, and with a dreamy expression on her face, "Too far! too far!" Suddenly she smiled and said :—

"I like you very much, Monsieur Bonnard, very much indeed."

The mules were harnessed. The young woman rose and, looking at me, burst into a peal of laughter.

"How I should enjoy," she cried, "seeing you attacked by brigands! You would say such extraordinary things to them! Take my hat and hold my umbrella, will you, Monsieur Bonnard?"

"There," said I to myself as I followed her, "is a droll little being. It was by an unpardonable distraction that nature gave a son to so giddy a creature."

When half-way on our journey we alighted to rest the mules. Madame Trépof took my arm and dragged me a few steps forward. Then, suddenly, she said in a tone of voice new to me :—

"Don't think me a wicked woman. My Georges knows that I am a good mother."

For a moment we walked on in silence. She raised her head and I saw that she wept.

"Madame," I said, "look at this ground hardened by five months of torrid heat. A tiny white lily has pierced it." And with my cane I pointed out the little blossom.

"Your soul," I added, "has also its white lily. That is enough to assure me that you are not wicked."

"Yes! yes! yes!" she cried, "I am really wicked, only I am ashamed to appear so to you who are good, very good."

"You know nothing about it," I replied.

"I do know; I know you," she said, with a smile.

And then she jumped again into her *lettica*.

GIRGENTI, *November 30th, 1901.*

I woke up this morning at Girgenti, and lost no time in repairing to the house of Micael-Angelo Polizzi.

I found M. Polizzi dressed in white from head to foot, and cooking sausages in a frying-pan. When he saw me he let go the handle, uttered a cry of joy, said he would mark the day by a white stone, and asked me to sit down. I glanced at the pictures covering the walls.

"The arts! the arts!" cried M. Polizzi, raising his arms. "The arts! What dignity! What consolation! I am a painter, your excellency."

"Is it possible," said I, "that you are at the same time a painter, an anti-quarian, and a wine merchant?"

"At your excellency's service," he replied. "I have now a *gucco*, of which each drop is a pearl. I will let your excellency taste it."

"I like Sicilian wines," I answered; "but it is not for them that I have come to see you, Monsieur Polizzi."

"For paintings, then? I will show you the masterpiece of Monrealese—an 'Adoration of the Shepherds.' A gem of art, your excellency."

"I shall take pleasure in looking at it; but let us speak first of what has brought me here. I have come from Paris on purpose to see the manuscript of the Golden Legend, which you wrote me that you owned."

At these words he again threw up his arms, and showed signs of the greatest agitation.

"Oh, the manuscript of the Golden Legend, your excellency! A ruby, a diamond!"

"Show it to me," I said.

"Show it to you!" retorted Polizzi. "And how can I, your excellency? I have not got it—I no longer have it!"

"What!" cried I, angrily, "what! You have made me come from Paris to Girgenti to see a manuscript, and when I get here you tell me it is no longer in your possession? That is outrageous, Monsieur—outrageous!"

Then Micael-Angelo Polizzi sank upon a chair in the attitude of an expiring hero, and I saw his eyes fill with tears.

"I am a father, your excellency, I am a father!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands. With sobs he added:—

"My son Rafaël, your excellency, wished to establish himself in Paris. He has hired a shop in the Rue Lafitte. I have given him all my most valuable possessions, my finest majolicas, my most beautiful faiences, my best pictures—and such pictures, Signor! Finally I gave him the manuscript of the Golden Legend. I would have given him my flesh and my blood. An only son!—the son of my poor dead wife."

"Then," said I, "while I, Monsieur, was travelling to Sicily in order to see the manuscript of the clerk Alexandre, that manuscript was in a shop of the Rue Lafitte, close to my house."

"It was there, that is positive," replied M. Polizzi, "and it is still there—at least, I hope so—your excellency."

He took from the counter a card, which he handed me, saying: "Here is my son's address. Make him known



to your friends, and you will oblige me. Faïences, enamels, stuffs, pictures—he has a complete assortment at moderate prices.”

I meekly took the card. My hand was on the door-knob when the Sicilian seized my arm. He had an inspired air.

“Ah! your excellency,” he exclaimed, “what a city is ours! It gave birth to Empedocles! Empedocles! What a man and what a citizen! There is near the harbour a statue of Empedocles, before which I bow my head each time I pass it. Ah! Signor, it is a new Empedocles our unhappy country needs. Shall I take you to see his statue, excellency? I shall be happy to act as your guide to the ruins.”

Keenly distressed and humiliated, I fled into the street, and seated myself upon a stone, hiding my face in my hands.

A peal of laughter made me look up, and I saw Madame Trépof running towards me. She seated herself beside me and displayed an abominable paste-board box, on which was a red and blue head, said by the inscription to be that of Empedocles.

“Yes, Madame,” said I, “but the wretch Polizzi has for ever disgusted me with Empedocles, and this portrait is not of a nature to render that ancient philosopher more agreeable to me.”

“Oh!” said Madame Trépof, “it is ugly, but it is rare. These boxes are never exported. At nine o’clock this morning we were at the factory. You see, we have not lost our time.”

“I see it quite well, Madame,” I answered in a bitter tone; “but I have lost mine.”

Instantly she became grave.

“Poor Monsieur Bonnard! Poor Monsieur Bonnard!” she murmured.

And taking my hand, she added: “Tell me all about it.”

My story was long, but she seemed much interested, asking a number of questions. She wished to know the

exact title of the manuscript, its appearance, size, age, and even the address of M. Rafaël Polizzi.

And I gave it to her, thus doing (oh! destiny) just what the wretched Polizzi had requested.

It is sometimes difficult to stop. I began to utter a flood of complaints and imprecations. Then Madame Trépof laughed.

“Why do you laugh?” said I.

“Because I am a wicked woman,” she replied.

And she took flight, leaving me alone and unhappy upon my stone.

PARIS, *December 8th*, 1901.

My unemptied trunks stood in the dining-room. I sat at my breakfast table. Thérèse stood near me, looking at me with benevolence and pity. Hamilcar rubbed himself against my legs, purring with delight.

Having swallowed my last mouthful of coffee I asked Thérèse for my cane and my hat, which she handed me distrustfully. She feared another departure. But I reassured her by asking to have dinner ready at six o’clock.

I went directly to the Rue Lafitte, and soon found the shop of Rafaël Polizzi.

M. Rafaël proved to be a phlegmatic young man, not endowed with his father’s declamatory powers.

I told him what brought me; he opened a cabinet, took out a manuscript and laid it upon a table where I could examine it at leisure.

Never have I experienced such an emotion. It was, in fact, the manuscript described by the librarian of Sir Thomas Raleigh; it was the manuscript of the clerk Alexandre which I saw! which I touched! I tried to read the legend of Saint Droctrovée. I could not; the letters danced before my eyes and my head swam. I was, however, able to recognise the manuscript’s undeniable authenticity.

I assumed an air of indifference in asking M. Rafaël the price of this

treasure. M. Polizzi replied that the manuscript did not belong to him, and that it was to be sold at auction at the Hotel des Ventes.

This was a terrible blow. Forcing myself to be calm, I said: "You surprise me, Monsieur. Your father, whom I recently saw at Girgenti, assured me that you were its owner."

"Until recently I was so," replied Rafaël. "I have sold the manuscript to an amateur whom I am forbidden to name, and who finds himself obliged to sell his collection. Honoured by my client's confidence, I am instructed by him to manage the sale, which will take place on the 23rd of this month. If you will give me your address I shall be happy to post you a catalogue."

I gave my address and left.

It was evident to me that the two rascals, father and son, had planned this sale, in order to sell the treasure for which I longed, at an exorbitant price. I was in their power. Whilst I reflected, I heard a coachman swear, and feeling in my side the pole of his vehicle, discovered that it was to me he addressed himself. Drawing back to avoid being run over, I saw within the carriage Madame Trépof, whom two fine horses drew into the street from which I had just emerged. She did not see me, and was smiling with that frank expression which made her retain at thirty all the charm of early youth.

"Eh! eh!" I said to myself, "she is laughing; she must have found a new match-box."

*December 23rd, 1901.*

I went in good time to the Hotel des Ventes, and took my seat. The room slowly filled, and after half an hour's delay the auctioneer and the expert Polizzi mounted the platform.

First they sold at low prices a number of manuscripts adorned by miniatures of suspicious freshness. Then a magnificent copy of the "Jewish war" caused animated bidding.

At last the expert Polizzi announced

No. 42, "The Golden Legend, French manuscript, two superb miniatures, put up at 3,000 francs."

"Three thousand! three thousand!" cried the auctioneer.

My temples throbbed, and I saw through a cloud a number of grave faces turned towards the manuscript, which a boy carried, opened, through the room.

"Three thousand fifty," I said.

"Three thousand fifty on the right," said the auctioneer, repeating my bid.

"Three thousand one hundred," cried M. Polizzi.

Then began a duel between the expert and myself.

"Three thousand five hundred."

"Six hundred."

"Seven hundred."

"Four thousand."

"Four thousand five hundred."

Then M. Polizzi made a formidable jump to six thousand.

Six thousand francs was all I had at my disposal. I risked the impossible.

"Six thousand one hundred," I cried.

Alas! the impossible did not suffice.

"Six thousand five hundred," calmly said M. Polizzi.

I hung my head, not daring to say yes or no, to the auctioneer who called:

"Six thousand five hundred, next to me; it was not from you on the right, next to me; no mistake! Six thousand five hundred. Does no one bid more than six thousand five hundred?"

A solemn silence reigned. Suddenly I felt my skull split. It was the auctioneer's hammer which, by a sharp blow, adjudged, irrevocably, No. 42 to M. Polizzi.

I was overcome, and felt the need of solitude and repose. But I did not leave my seat. Hope is tenacious. I had a hope. I thought the purchaser of the manuscript might be an intelligent and liberal bibliophile who would allow me to have access to it, and even to publish the more important portions. That is why, when the sale was over, I approached the expert.



"Monsieur," said I, "did you buy No. 42 for yourself or on commission?"

"On commission. I had orders not to let it escape me at any price."

"Can you tell me the name of the purchaser?"

"I am distressed not to be able to oblige you. But that is strictly forbidden me."

I left him in despair.

*December 24th, 1901.*

"Thérèse, do you not hear someone ringing the bell?"

Thérèse did not answer. She was without doubt gossiping with the concierge. The bell rang again. I rose from my chair and went to open the door. There I found a pretty little boy of ten. He had feathers in his hat and a lace ruff on his blouse. In his arms he held a package as big as himself, and he asked me if I was Monsieur Sylvestre Bonnard. I told him "yes"; he handed me the package, said that it was sent by his mamma, and ran downstairs.

It was a large package, but not very heavy. I took it into my library, removed its ribbons and papers to find—what? A big log, a real Christmas log, but so light that I decided it must be hollow. I discovered that it was, in fact, composed of two parts, secured by hooks, and opening on hinges. I unfasten the hooks, and am inundated by violets; they fall upon my table, my knees and my carpet.

"Thérèse! Thérèse! bring vases filled with water. Here are violets, which came I do not know from what country or from what hand, but it must be from a perfumed country and from a gracious hand."

I have put all the violets on my table, which they entirely cover. But there still remains something in the log, a manuscript. It is . . . I cannot

believe it and cannot doubt it . . . it is the Golden Legend, the manuscript of the clerk Alexandre! Here is the "Purification of the Virgin" and the "Crowning of Proserpine," here is the "Legend of Saint Droctovée." I gaze at this relic perfumed by violets. I turn its leaves and I find a card bearing this name: "Princess Trépof."

At this moment Thérèse entered the library. She was much excited.

"Monsieur," she exclaimed, "guess whom I have just seen in a carriage with armorial bearings which stopped before the door of this house."

"Princess Trépof," I cried.

"I know nothing about any Princess Trépof," replied Thérèse. "The woman I saw was dressed like a duchess, and it was that little Madame Coccoz to whom you sent a Christmas log when her baby was born. I knew her at once."

"What!" I asked, "you say that was Madame Coccoz, the wife of the book-agent?"

"It was she, Monsieur. She has not changed. The Coccoz is only a little stouter than before. A woman who was taken in from charity to come here in a grand carriage and display her velvets and laces. Is it not shameful?"

"Thérèse!" I shouted in a terrible voice, "if you speak of that lady except with profound respect, you leave my service."

"Bonnard," I said to myself, "you can decipher old texts, but you cannot read the book of life. You credited Madame Trépof with the soul of a butterfly, and remained blind to her lovely nature. Out of gratitude she has expended more zeal and imagination than you have ever in your life displayed to serve another. She has magnificently repaid you for her 'Christmas Log.'"

## THE IDLERS' CLUB

By ROBERT BARR

Here are the rigours of  
*Xmas.* Christmas upon us again!

It seems but the other day

I was writing platitudes on this hackneyed subject, and yet that was a year ago. The only advantage this dismal season possesses is that there is nothing new to be said about it. We call the present issue of *THE IDLER* a Christmas Number, and try to make it so by having no mention of the festal season in its pages from cover to cover. To make the thing complete, we ought to charge double price; then you would *know* Christmas was at hand. But as every second person you meet will expect a contribution from you that he doesn't deserve, *THE IDLER* has never had the cheek to join the great army of claimants; and so it asks you merely to bang the usual sixpence.

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I did intend to publish

*A* a rattling good ghost  
*Ghost Story.* story this month, but the Sub-Editor would not let

me. A Sub-Editor is a tactful man, whose success depends on his allowing the Editor to think he bosses the show. While the Editor is under this delusion, he is good-natured and easy to get along with. Nevertheless, it is the Sub-Editors, and not the Editors, who are responsible for the supreme excellence of the magazines of to-day, and the greater credit is theirs, because they have not only to manage the magazines, but the Editors as well. On the 14th of June, when an Editor's thoughts are naturally turned upon Christmas, I resolved to do something original with the December Number, so I said to my Sub-Editor:—

"I want to have a hair-raising ghost-

story for Christmas. I wish you would look out for one."

He answered: "Yes, sir."

Now, if he had given expression to what was in his mind, he would have replied:—

"Every publication in England will be printing a ghost story at Christmas. They've always done it, and they can't get out of the habit, so why not earn the gratitude of *IDLER* readers by letting them off this time?"

If he had said that, we would surely have had a ghost story in this number; but he knew better how an Editor should be played. Therefore, he merely answered, "Yes, sir," in a tone of apparent acquiescence.

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Time went on—as I

*The* have been complaining it  
*Sub-Editor.* does—bringing us Christmas before we are ready for it, and when it was too late to do anything, the Sub-Editor, with many salaams, approached the throne, and said meekly:—

"All the ghost stories so far received have been drivell. What are we to do?"

"Better advertise: 'Lost, strayed, or stolen—a ghost story.' Offer a suitable reward," I suggested.

"It is too late for that, I'm afraid."

"Then get into communication with some author you can depend on, offer him extra pay for overtime—and thus shall the ghost walk."

"There is only one author in England who can write an original ghost story."

"Yes; but he's so busy with Sherlock Holmes just now that——"

"The author I mean is yourself," said the clever Sub-Editor.

After all, it is little wonder that these talented Sub-Editors produce such



unexampled magazines, when their judgment of our highest literature is so excellent. They know a good thing when they see it. I had entirely forgotten that "From Whose Bourn" is the best ghost story that ever was. When I wrote it and published it, I charged sixpence for it; but now that Chatto & Windus own the book, they ask seven times that amount. This shows you how truly modest a real author is; and as for advertising his own merits—he wouldn't do it if you paid him for it.

Yes; "From Whose Bourn" is a ghost story, if you like. I set the ghosts at work, and didn't allow them to slouch round some dilapidated manor house with their hands in their pockets, spoiling the rentable value of the premises. They were *useful* ghosts, and each spook of them was a distinct character in the book. Poverty-stricken authors of former days contented themselves with one story one ghost, just like the one man one vote propaganda. But I spared no expense, and employed at least a dozen, which was a ha'penny each as I sold the story, or threepence-ha'penny apiece as Chatto charges for the work. Them ghosts has riz—not only from the dead, but in market value. They certainly proved most useful spectres to me, as they lifted me from a salaried minion to the position of a free man, earning quick lunches with the drippings of a stylographic pen. "There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave to tell us this," said Horatio to Hamlet; but it needed twelve ghosts to rise from my ink-bottle to tell me that the public would buy a story of mine.

For many years I have made up Christmas Numbers for the delectation of an indulgent British public. Most of these were put together in the

fourth floor front room at 325, Strand, a building which has twice become a ghost since that time. I was turned out of it that it might be pulled down, the owners believing that a pub would pay better than a publishing office. That pub has since been swept away by the London County Council, and I believe that at this moment 325, Strand, is wandering about, an invisible spirit, waiting for the County Council to provide it with a new body. I wonder if any author has ever used the spectre of a building as a character in a Christmas story? It is a well-known scientific fact that when a haunted house is burnt down, the ghosts do not frequent the edifice that is erected in its stead. My own theory is that the ghosts immediately occupy the spectre of the destroyed dwelling and live happy ever after. However, let us not dally in the flowery paths of science, but confine ourselves to the history of 325, Strand, which no longer exists. When I first entered London, I rented the first floor front at 325, and then the first floor back, and finally, as Christmas Numbers prospered, I took the whole house. A man's intellectual work is done immediately under his hat, so in this house the intellectual tasks were accomplished next to the roof; that is to say, I wrote classics by way of short stories in the top storey, while business was conducted on the floors below.

Well, one day—let us say the 14th of June—I resolved to abandon the kind of Christmas Number we had hitherto got out, and to issue one that contained a complete novel written especially for us by some well-known writer. I made the bargain with the well-known writer, and waited for the story. *Tempus fugited*, as is customary with *tempus*, but no novel was forthcoming, in spite of my appeals. At last I telegraphed to the author that

I must have at least half of the work by the end of that week, and he replied calmly that he had not put pen to paper, so far as this story was concerned, and could not supply copy until Christmas week, which he considered would be in ample time! It would have been in ample time for Christmas a year from then, but here was I with artists and block-makers waiting, with printers howling for copy, with advertising contracts signed, and orders in for the number from all over the country. There stared me in the face the standing advertisement that we would issue an excellent and striking novel by a well-known author. Luckily, I hadn't mentioned his name. Yes, I suppose I *did* use some language on authors in general, but, when I threw off my coat, I had no idea I was going to join the fraternity. *Somebody* had to do that novel, and all the rest at 325 were busy; so I shouted downstairs that, if any person were allowed to reach my door on any pretence whatever, I'd massacre him—and then I went at work to write a novel against time. Ten to one Barr one—that is to say, I had one chance in ten of succeeding.

If any of you people possess a sixpenny original edition of "From Whose Bourn," you are the happy owners of the very worst piece of hurried newspaper English that ever was written. I am thankful to say I have no copy of it; but when last I staggered through it, the language reminded me of riding a solid tyred cycle over the unbroken metal of a new road. I wonder anybody understood it; but the story was there, and perhaps that helped. I might have got style and no story from the other fellow if he had kept his contract, and after all, the play's the thing. I am pleased to say it sold like hot cakes. Yet, in the making, it nearly produced one more ghost than was bargained for. I was deeply

absorbed in my work—the room was silent; high above the roar of London—and I was at the most appalling part of the yarn, with my hair standing on end, when I was startled by a whining voice at my elbow, saying:—

"Beg y' pardon, sir, but would you please give a pore man a lift——"

I did—instantly. With a yell of terror I lifted him clear over the banisters, and he went crashing down that circular stairway as if he were the whole County Council in a body, breaking up the Strand. I never was so frightened in my life before—and I don't suppose he was less terrorised. In some way he had escaped the vigilance of those down below, and had stolen, unperceived, into my room.

The business department took charge of him as he came thundering down, and when he threatened to appeal to the law, offered to send out the office boy for a policeman; but the tramp thought better of it, and accepted some money as a soothing salve. They told him that a lunatic, with a leaning toward homicide, occupied the upper room, and that he ought to be thankful he had escaped with his life. He admitted he was, but said his nerves were shattered, and begged a few more pence to set them right with a drop o' gin. They hinted that he had had a drop too much already, which was true in two senses; but they gave him the money, and he departed, while I, with nerves also tingling, went on with my story. We never met again.

It is not a safe thing to startle a man out of his wits. An American doctor, whose nerves had gone wrong, came over to this country that he might live in a more sedative climate than that to which he had been accustomed. He was one of those who had formed the detestable habit of



carrying a loaded revolver. The doctor was walking along a London street, when a man who thought he knew him, smote him suddenly on the shoulder. The doctor whirled round, whipping out the revolver as he turned, and shot his assailant dead. From the instant the hand smote the shoulder until the smiter was in the next world barely a second of time had passed, and, although the street was thronged, no one had a chance of averting the catastrophe. The doctor stood there like a man in a daze, the smoking revolver in his shaking hand and a shapeless heap at his feet. He offered no resistance when the policeman arrested him, and it was shown at his trial that the unexpected blow on the shoulder had overturned a mind already trembling in the balance.

That monumental work, the Oxford English Dictionary, has been compiled with the aid of thousands of voluntary helpers, writing from all quarters of the globe. In the early days, Dr. Murray—Editor of the Dictionary—received some of his most valuable suggestions from a physician whose address was a noted lunatic asylum. Once Dr. Murray visited him, thinking him one of the medical men in charge of the institution, but was astonished to learn that his talented correspondent was an inmate. He was the doctor who had been startled into killing in a London street the man that smote him on the shoulder.

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*The Case of John Rounds.* Some very remarkable things happened in 325, Strand, while I was tenant of the building. It

took no great stretch of the imagination to believe the place haunted, for it had evidently been an old mansion in days gone by, and the ancient carved marble mantelpieces were never intended for office wear. One of

the most curious episodes of my life was my experience with Mr. John Rounds. I use the name Rounds, for, although it was not his title, it is so close to it that those who knew him will at once recognise the man I mean, while to the general public one name is as good as another. I never met Mr. John Rounds—or rather, I should say, I don't know for certain that I ever met him in the flesh. When I first took rooms at 325, Strand, they were to serve the purpose in a humble way of being the publishing offices of a weekly paper I was then editing. The weekly prospered, as I have remarked, and finally the whole building belonged to it *pro tem*. In the top room front I compiled Christmas Numbers when the season came round. The weekly contained much information, but now and then this information was misleading, as sometimes happens in the most intellectual of offices. One morning I received a polite well-written note, signed by John Rounds, pointing out that the Battle of Waterloo had been fought on Sunday and not on Friday as had been stated in my excellent journal. That was all right, and the letter went into the waste basket. Next week a letter arrived from Mr. Rounds saying Mount Everest was 29,002 feet high and not 29,103 as stated in my estimable, &c., &c. And so it went on week after week. It seemed impossible to get out an issue that was accurate enough to please Mr. Rounds. At last I wrote him a sharp letter, and requested him to cease sending information where it was not wanted. He replied with the utmost good nature that I was wrong (as usual) in saying information was not wanted in my office, for that was just the one spot on earth where it *was* wanted, and he proposed to fill that want as well as he could; therefore he begged leave to suggest that The Man in the Iron Mask could not have been a son of Louis XI., as asserted in the weekly, because, &c., &c.

However, I turned the tables on him by sending *An* to him any queries I *Elusive* received from subscribers *Man.* that I could not answer, and I always got from him a prompt and accurate reply. This went on for years, and I came to have a great respect and liking for John Rounds. Often I invited him to meet me, but he was never able to accept for some reason or another. He seemed to belong to several very good clubs, and always wrote from one of them, mostly from the Eccentric Club, which I thought very suitable, but no letter of his ever was headed with a private address.

One Saturday night Mr. Bronson Howard, the dramatist, and myself attended an entertainment at the Press Club, which at that time occupied rooms on Ludgate Circus. We were asked to say a few words to the assemblage, which we did. On Monday I received a letter from John Rounds expressing the pleasure he felt at seeing me on Saturday night, he being one of the audience at the Press Club. I replied reproaching him for not coming forward in a friendly manner and giving me a chance of making his personal acquaintance. He answered that he would have done so were it not that I had a friend with me. Then I wrote and said this hide-and-seek business must cease; that he should either accept my invitation to dine or extend an invitation to me. The response to my ultimatum was an invitation to dine with him at the Eccentric Club that day fortnight. He said he would have set an earlier date, but he would be exceedingly busy for the next two weeks. This suited me very well, for I, too, was busy.

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One of my bad habits is  
 2 that I never do a thing  
 until it must be done. I  
 have tried all my life to break myself of

this vice, yet here I am, writing these lines on the very last day that the printers allow me to send in matter for the Christmas IDLER. It was just the same in the old days, and on the occasion of which I write, I had postponed the making-up of the Christmas Number until I had to work night and day during the two weeks before I was to dine with John Rounds. The last man out at 325, Strand, would shout "Good-night" up the circular stairs at six o'clock. I would hear the front door slam with a hollow bang that seemed to say "Empty house," and I was then alone for as long as I liked to work. My early training on the editorial staff of a morning paper made me a sort of night-hawk, anyhow, and I liked the silent hours after six. "Now," I'd say to myself, when I heard the front door bang, "*now* I'll get some work done." The hours passed unnoticed, and sometimes grey dawn struggling with the gaslight was the first intimation I received of their flight.

Regarding the particular night of which I write, I have often wondered since then that I was not startled by the knock at the door of that upper room; but at the moment the cry of "Good-night" seemed still to be ringing in my ears, and I thought some belated employé had a question to ask, so I shouted, "Come in!"

No one entered, and as I waited, looking over my shoulder at the door, I heard the clock in the steeple outside slowly strike twelve, and I was amazed to find it so late. "*Come in!*" I shouted again, and began to think there had been no knock, when it was repeated. I rose and flung open the door. The gaslight above my desk cut diagonally across the upper landing, leaving one triangle in shadow. In this shadow stood a man, with a soft felt hat on his head, the brim drawn down over his eyes. One hand grasped the stair rail. After knocking at the door, he must have stepped back to the opposite wall,



I peered at him, but could make nothing of the obscurity, except what I have stated.

"I am John Rounds," he said, in a voice that seemed to show the exertion he had undergone in climbing this circular stair.

"Well, you are very welcome," I cried. "Come right in."

"No; I cannot stop. I merely wanted to say that I shall be unable to keep the appointment I made with you."

"All right. We'll make another. Can't you come in for a moment?"

But he had already said "Good-night," and was going down the stairway. I lit a wax vesta and held it over the dark well of the stair. I saw his felt hat go round and round, as if it had been flung from a tower, and was slowly circling to the ground.

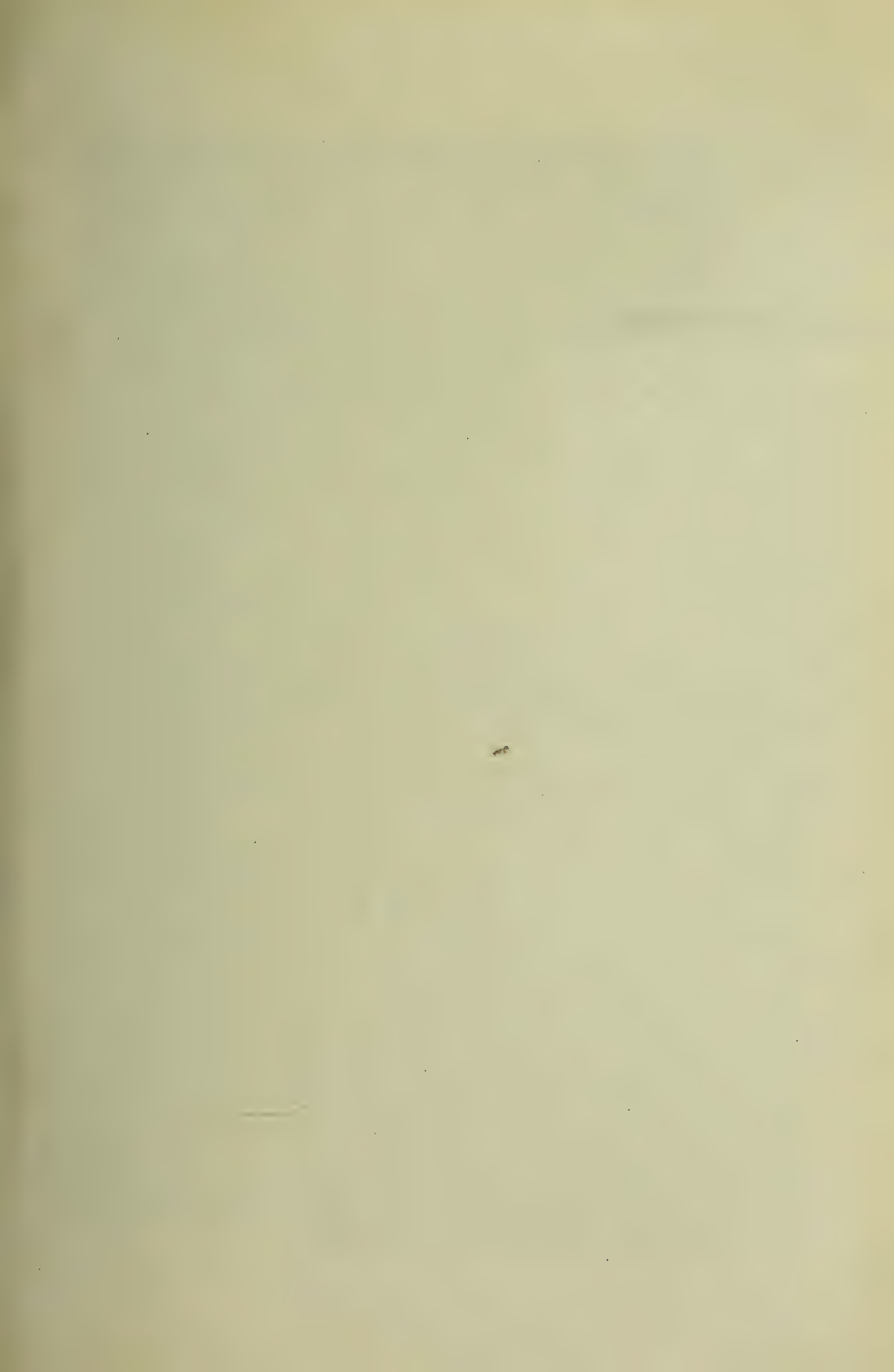
"Good-night!" I shouted. There was no reply. I waited to hear the door slam, but no sound came up that dark well; and, as the vesta went out, I began vaguely to wonder how the man had got in. I had gone out for dinner at eight o'clock, and was certain I had closed the door as I came in. The door was self-locking—had a Yale lock, which was put on when I took the house. Of course, I might have left the door ajar, but in that case a policeman was likely to have investigated. By this time there came over me a cold desire to get out of that silent house and mix with my fellow-creatures. I put out the gas, lit another match, and told myself that there was no need to hurry—that the stairs were dangerous. I got to the street floor with almost unnecessary deliberateness, but there was a strange metallic taste in my mouth,

and I felt that creeping of the scalp which gives rise to the legend that hair stands on end. The door was locked tightly enough when I reached it, and I shall never forget what a living joy the midnight roar of the Strand seemed when I opened the door.

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*Finis.* Almost the first item that struck me on opening

the newspaper next morning was headed: "Tragic Occurrence at a Club." John Rounds had entered the Eccentric Club at midnight, and had died suddenly before medical assistance could be obtained. So far as I am aware, no relative of his ever turned up. The papers said he was an accountant in one of the big railway systems to the north. I talked with the waiter of the Eccentric Club, in whose arms the unfortunate man died, and he said that the fatality took place just before the clock struck twelve. In the excitement of the moment he is quite likely to have made a mistake regarding the time. My own explanation is that I must have left the door ajar; that John Rounds, seeing one light in the tall, narrow building, and knowing it to be my room—for I had written him several times where to find me—had come up. At the time I saw him, he was probably deadly ill, which accounted for his curtness and desire to get away. He could have taken a hansom at my door, and reached the Eccentric Club in a few minutes. I have set things down exactly as they occurred. It is all a question of some seconds whether this is a ghost story or not.







"OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY."

*Photo by Maurice Nuts.*



"WATERS DANCING IN THE SUNSHINE."

*Photo by Arthur Wilkinson.*

## OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

By ARTHUR SCAMMELL

A CERTAIN valley in a southern county, an occasional haunt of mine, is bounded, as all valleys should be on the northern side, by a wood-crowned hill: a wood which lies along the horizon a purply black cloud in winter, a bank of living green in summer, with serrated edge of tall fir tops against the sky.

Towards the west the hill takes a downward curve and the wood comes to an end; the last tree, a sturdy short-stemmed oak, leans a little outward from its fellows and stretches a great arm towards the sunset.

Though I have never been there, yet I know that virgin turf lies along the edge of the wood on this side; there the violet is found before winter is done;

the openings in the wood are flooded with hyacinths, and the grass freckled with cowslips in May, and summer's footsteps are marked by daintiest flowers, the bee orchis, the wild thyme and the harebell. There autumn burns the beech leaves to their richest orange; the frosty moonlight is brightest and the snow storm leaves its purest drift along that happy wood-side.

And yet for all that when I sit at evening in the garden of the valley below, or look from the window in early morning, the eye tends to pass quickly along the horizon line, and to linger at the western verge where the great oak tree ends the wood; and this not mainly because of the lovely line made by the descending hill, nor yet because, in the



fulness of summer the sunset is there, and the tree, outlined against the sky, seems to float in a sea of liquid light. The special charm lies rather in the mystery of the Beyond. An unseen, untrodden pathway skirts that woodland corner, the trunk of that tree is the pillar, and the outstretched bough the lintel of a gateway into the Land of Dreams, the country of Over the Hills and Far Away.

Unseen by mortal eyes that country, untrodden its paths; yet messengers of mine, dreams and imaginings, have come and gone between this land and that for many years past, so that I know a good deal of what lies behind the hill barrier. I know that the climate of the country is something like ours—but with a difference—a difference in degree, and especially a difference in time; sometimes merely an improvement upon our weather, oftener its complete opposite.

When the long black frost, the frost which came in with such brilliance and sparkle, has far outlasted its welcome, yet lingers still like an unloved guest; when day after day the same grey sky lowers upon the desolate earth; “when icicles hang by the wall” for weeks, with never a ray of sunshine to kindle a diamond upon them; and the starved birds “sit brooding in the snow:” snow now all smirched and stale: when wild animals and birds faint for hunger, and the minds of men are oppressed with the squalor of winter, then—could we but get a glimpse across that borderland—we should see skies of blue and racing clouds, waters dancing in the sunshine, and a million forest leaves fluttering in the summer breeze.

When the east wind blows in April upon a dry and barren world, so that even the over-due sloe blossom looks



“HAPPY VALLEYS.”

*Photo by Arthur Wilkinson.*



"WHERE THE OWL HOOTS."

*Photo by Arthur Wilkinson.*

untimely, and shivers upon its thorn ; over there the sun shines warm in happy valleys where the cowslips need grow tall in order to keep their heads above the swiftly growing grass, and the black-bird lives in such ease he would hardly care to sing but for rivalry of the thrush.

Sometimes—very, very seldom, but sometimes—we have too much sunshine here. I have seen a July meadow, in which there was not one green blade of grass, and where as I walked the iron-tinged dust flew up from beneath my feet ; and then, whilst the sun thus played the tyrant over us, so that the scanty leafage of the trees could not shelter the roots from his fierce rays, and many a noble beech and elm perished—then, over the hills and far away, the rumble of summer thunder was daily heard in the land ; the western breeze brought its fleet of cloud

argosies, and the air was full of the whispering rain.

When I have lain awake in the heaviness of an August night, a faintest shiver of ivy leaves at the window has called up a view of night in the far-off country ; an April moon looking down upon a wood, where violets and coolest primrose plants grow around the tree boles, and the branches are just spangled with the new buds.

Summer there lasts into October, and autumn—a calm and golden Indian summer, followed by rousing leaf-scattering gales—only dies at Christmas ; and when the last of the happy autumn fields loses its warmth of stubble, and the bare earth shows purple behind the plough, the cheery caw of the rook feeding in the furrow, and the robin's song from the bare ash, tell of winter near at last, but of winter



brief and mild, of winter with spring following close behind.

Frosty, but kindly ; cold indeed, but the sort of cold that thrills the body with health, and makes a man in love with life on crisp December mornings, when grass and bush and tree give back the sunshine from thickly powdered diamond dust. Cold which gently yields to the morning sun, so that at midday on a southern sloping bank one may sit at ease and see the earth, not dead as in our pitiless Januaries, but softly sleeping, and ready to open the million eyes of her buds at the first kiss of spring. Cold which, whilst giving its proper zest to the wintry fireside, yet tempts one to wander out at night into the woodland ways, where the fox prowls and the owl hoots, and the tracery of overhead boughs is repeated in moon-cast shadow upon the frozen ground.

Sometimes, when on this side the barrier we are well-nigh choked with fog—a yellow fog thoroughly charged with water or smoke or both—they have a snow fall over there ; the air is clear and wind voices are abroad ; loud calls as of warning from high boughs of the elm, fleeting whispers of a secret along the dry grasses of the downs ; then the grey evening light is spangled with falling flakes, and the quiet places of the woods are filled with sound and motion and a still deeper sense of mystery ; all night the north wind “gives snow like wool,” and morning sees the world swathed in whiteness, that whiteness of driven snow of which we all speak, but the full glory of which not all have seen ; an incomparable purity and severity expressed not in the colour alone, but in the exquisite sculpturing of line and mass ; in arching



"A LAND OF MOUNTAINS."

Photo by Arthur Wilkinson



"BEAUTIFUL SNOW."

*Photo by Arthur Wilkinson.*



cavern and sharply cut ledge ; in mound and hollow, buttress and dome ; fairy habitations and citadels for elves ; the glory of an hour, the hour of early morning before warmth and dust and time have brushed the frozen bloom ; and then—not as with us where the snow, like many another fair thing, outlives its beauty and becomes a weariness and an offence, but lingering only for one setting sun to turn the whiteness of the hill tops to glory of rose and purple—the beautiful snow vanishes as swiftly as it came.

The short-lived severity of the weather is ended by a stiff gale ; the south-westerly wind, at once mild and animating, sweeps in from the Atlantic, filling the sky with dark low-lying clouds, which fly in eager chase across the sky, seeming to inspire the brown and leafless trees with emulation, for they tug madly at their moorings, and lean all one way, and stretch arms and hair to the roaring breeze as if

To out-trip the skyey speed  
Scarce seemed a vision.

The rain scuds in vertical waves along the hill-sides, filling all the hollow places of the woods with clear brown water ; and when at sunset through a ragged breach in the clouds a ray of dusky fire shines amongst the trees, a million drops upon the branches reflect its glory, the birds begin to “sing their thankful hymns,” and, lo, the winter is over and gone.

The heart of the country over the hills is a land of mountains : those mountains which dwellers amongst lowly hills, readers of Ruskin and Tyndall, are wont to dream of. Vaster than the Himalayas, more beautiful in contour than the Alps, and crowned with rosier morning and evening peaks ; a hundred forests lie hidden in their folds, and everywhere is heard the voice of the waters ; the roar of cataracts, the ripple of streams ; and when, of star-light nights, the winds are abroad, earth and

air are tremulous with magic sound ; far-off songs of the spirits of the mountain, æolian harpings, and “the horns of Elf-land faintly blowing.”

Those great rivers which we read of, and whose very names kindle the imagination ; “that great river, the river Euphrates,” the Nile, “Abana and Pharpar, crystal streams,” Humboldt’s Amazon, and Livingstone’s Niger, though supposed to be well known, and flowing to-day in Syria, Africa, or America, are in very truth only to be found in the country Over the Hills and Far Away. And there they are not mere highways of traffic, ignoble bearers of excursion steamers and coal barges, but flow in all their ancient pride and purity, so that those who gaze upon their waters to-day may still see the wonders of old time, the princess wading amongst the bullrushes towards the floating cradle of Moses ; or Cleopatra’s barge, like a burnished throne upon the waters, in splendid pageant as of old ; but here black care sits no more behind the helmsman, and the queen is no longer sick at heart for a passing empire and a lover doomed ; and no “Worm of Nilus” stores poison for her breast ; for all the fair shows that still live on in the country Over the Hills and Far Away, live on without the grief that hung upon them here : the joy of life is there, but not the shadow of death ; the kiss without the betrayal ; roses but never a thorn.

But of continents and seas, mountain ranges and great rivers I care less to tell, than of little nooks here and there to which my fancy often flies. A little garden with an old wall, upon which house-leek and hart’s tongue ferns grow, and above the wall, trees, great elms with building rooks, and behind them an old, old church tower of grey stone flecked with orange coloured lichens. To the fancy of a small boy playing in the garden, the trees were (and are) at least a hundred feet high, and the tower huge as Babel, and as ancient ; a place of



"EVENING PEACE."

*Photo by Arthur Wilkinson.*

unspeakable awe, tenanted by dreadful beings; some of them, turned to stone, but alive for all that, thrust their horrid shapes outwards from the battlements as though in act to spring.

There is a lane in a favoured valley of the country where all the year round the birds sing, the bluebells bloom and a tiny thread of water trickles down to the neighbouring brook: hedgerow oaks and elms make great pools of shadow, and upon a fallen trunk by the green wayside two lovers, with more than the gladness of May in their hearts, sit whispering over the forget-me-nots. Some such lane and brook may still be found on this side the barrier, in Hampshire county; but the real scene, lit with all the grace but none of the sadness of memory, is over the hills and very far away.

And of such hallowed ground the country is well-nigh made: not a reader of mine but will know of a favoured spot or two there; places sacred to happiest memories, of childhood, friendship and love; haunts of morning joy and evening peace; flower-strewn bridal paths, and homely garden closes.

The scenes of fable and romance lie there, especially those that children read and dream of. The princess still sleeps in the enchanted castle, and the bold lover dares. Hans Anderson's fir tree is planted again in the wood where the children gathered wild strawberries; and the wind and sunshine kiss the tree as of old, and bid it rejoice in its now everlasting youth. The trees of the virgin forest still let the sunshine sift through the dancing leaves on Pan-puk-Keewis standing on the beaver's dam:



## THE IDLER

and the sea holds quite an archipelago of the islands of romance. Paul and Virginia's, and Robinson Crusoe's: Calypso still sits in the mouth of her cave, burning incense of fragrant woods, and by the side of "the wine-dark sea" Nausicaa plays at stool-ball with her maidens.

There, too, and not "In Tempe nor the dales of Arcady," are the living scenes which Keats saw in marble bas-relief upon the immortal urn. There is the little town, "mountain-built with peaceful citadel"; and there the lovers, not in cold stone, but "for ever panting and for ever young," underneath those

Happy, happy boughs, that cannot shed  
Their leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu.

The wood over there, of which the gateway oak is an advanced picket, is none other than the forest of Arden,

and Rosalind still finds the trees ballad-hung; and "the brook that brawls along the wood," and all the stones therein speak their old philosophy to Mons. Jaques, and the mazes of the unrivalled romance are threaded there on sunshine mornings as gaily as on the day when the first Rosalind put on doublet and hose.

Bye-path meadow is there, restful to the eye, and easy to the tired tread; no longer a forbidden path, but the direct way to the Delectable Mountains, the land Beulah, and the Celestial City (for that happy country knows nothing of the abominable divorce which has been decreed here between things pleasant and things profitable). In a grassy dell of the uplands lies the shepherd boy watching his flock; to the music of humming bees and tinkling sheep bells



"THE BROOK THAT BRAWLS ALONG THE WOOD."

*Photo by Maurice Nuts.*



"FARM COTTAGES."

*Photo by Maurice Nuts.*

he sings—as years ago Bunyan heard  
him sing—his song of content—

He that is down need fear no fall,  
He that is low no pride.

A forgotten philosophy now, but perhaps  
not quite empty of wisdom for  
all that.

This is the land to which Keats's  
nightingale flew when she left him in a  
dream-like trance, in the garden at  
Hampstead; and now she sings her  
nightly song to those

Magic casements opening on the foam  
Of charmed seas in fairy lands forlorn.

Shelley's skylark, too, inhabits there,  
coming now and again in our happiest  
moments to teach us a little of "the  
gladness which its soul doth know,"  
and the notes seem to reach our hearts  
rather than our ears, and we long to  
take wings like the bird and fly with it  
across the hills to the

Fountains

Of its happy strain,  
Those fields and waves and mountains,  
Those shapes of sky and plain.

The poets, from Virgil onwards, who  
sang of Arcadia must have had visions  
of this land beyond the hills, where the  
pastoral life and the arts of husbandry  
are still held in honour; where the  
valleys laugh with corn and the hills are  
dappled with sheep; where, better still,  
simplicity of heart and contentment  
are common unmarked virtues; where  
even rural merriment is still possible,  
and village green and farmhouse fireside  
are enlivened by the sound of flute and  
fiddle, song and dance.

So completely is the land given up to  
farming that all the houses which I  
know there are farmhouses, or farm  
cottages, and look out from an ample  
surrounding of barns and stables, rick  
and cattle yards, orchards and great  
domestic elms. The houses themselves  
are so much in love with nature that  
they wear her clinging favours upon  
every porch and wall and chimney; roses  
and jessamines for bloom, and ivy for  
summer coolness and winter warmth;



whilst the roofs, mellow red tile, thatch, or venerable grey stone, are overgrown with lichen, moss and house-leek.

One of these houses I know well, for there I was to have lived; it was furnished to my mind, swept and garnished, and I said to myself in sweet anticipation:—

Oh, soul, make merry and carouse,  
Dear soul, for all is well.

In fancy I seemed already to pace its cool hall and passages; to sleep soundly in the "large upper chamber whose window is toward the sun-rising—the name of the chamber was peace"—to sit of evenings in the garden twilight, or over the latest flickerings of my wood fire, listening to the ticking of the old clock, and the whispers of the wind in the trees without, chewing the cud of sweet—never bitter—fancy. How

neat handed my Phyllis, and how savoury the dishes she would dress!

Unbroken the peace and order within those charmed walls, unbroken and unbreakable the household effects: and all unknown and unneeded that besom of destruction, the house-cleaning broom.

I knew that the house was over the hill, in the other country, but I did not know how far away; only a few steps I thought: full of hope was I then, nay, of certainty; and not one poor house only, but the whole of the promised land lay before me whence to choose.

I never entered the promised land, and only the shadow of me occupies that house; there I mingle with friends and neighbours, shadows all of us of the men we might have been, the men we were going to be: there we do all the good deeds that we leave undone here,



"BEAUTY AND MYSTERY."

Photo by Arthur Wilkinson.

## OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY

and avoid all the evil ones which here we commit. The love which we longed for, but which was neither deserved nor won ; or, sadder still, being won was not kept, there lies warm in our bosoms, and with it comes the honour and obedience of which at last we are worthy. The happy mean betwixt poverty and riches, the mention of which is mere irony here, is there attained, and, more wonderful still, these glorified shadows of ours are content with it.

Pleasures on this side the hill are only too well likened in their evanescence to the poppy and the snowflake ; but over there pleasures may shift and change like the hues of the sea on a day of sunshine and light cloud, but they never leave us.

Of joy and peace here we get but rare and fitful snatches ; a table scantily spread in the wilderness ; a hasty bivouac on the battlefield, whilst the opposing army of cares holds off in brief and doubtful truce ; but in that land of safety, deepest peace is the element in which we live and move, the very breath of our nostrils and "joy whose hand is ever at his lips, bidding farewell" to us here, makes his abiding city there.

Spirits are finely tempered in that charmed air, and never lose their keenness, so that the good things of life, coming though they do in full measure,

heaped up, and running over, never cloy the palate but are

Still a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets  
Where no crude surfeit reigns.

The fair face of nature never loses its beauty and mystery, nor love its rapture : the converse of friends, our books, our music, labour and rest, light of the morning and grateful darkness of night never stale by repetition, and that sad old German saying, "there is only one first time," holds not in the country over the hills.

I have pictured this happy land as lying just on the other side of yonder not distant hill, and as though one might easily cross the horizon line and enter in. But if I should ever climb the hill and pass beneath the bough of the oak to the other side, should I in deed and in truth find myself within its charmed borders ? Would there not be yet another hill to scale, and another horizon's purple rim to pass ? Would not the voices of invitation still sound from the distance ; "thinner, clearer, farther going" ? And if my steps should still go on and on, over hill and valley till feet could go no farther, and the last green meadow by the way—the meadow with the grassy mounds—invite the weary to repose. What then ? Would the quest at last be attained ? Or would that Vision Beautiful, that Country of the Ideal, the Land of Promise, *still* lie Over the Hills and Far Away ?





THE O'RUDDY.

# THE O'RUDDY

By STEPHEN CRANE and ROBERT BARR

I.

**M**Y chieftain ancestors had lived at Glandore for many centuries, and were very well known. Hardly a ship could pass the Old Head of Kinsale without some boats putting off to exchange the time of day with her, and our family name was on men's tongues in half the seaports of Europe, I dare say. My ancestors lived in castles which were like churches stuck on end, and they drank the best of everything, amid the joyous cries of a devoted peasantry. But the good times passed away soon enough, and when I had reached the age of eighteen, we had nobody on the land but a few fisher folk and small farmers—people who were almost law-abiding—and my father came to die more from the disappointment than from any other cause. Before the end he sent for me to come to his bedside. "Tom," he said, "I brought you into existence, and God help you safe out of it, for you are not the kind of man ever to turn your hand to work, and there is only enough money to last a gentleman five more years. The *Mariha Bixby*, she was, out of Bristol for the West Indies, and if it hadn't been for her, we would never have got along this far with plenty to eat and drink. However, I leave you, beside the money, the two swords—the grand one that King Louis, God bless him! gave me, and the plain one that will really be of use to you if you get into a disturbance. Then here is the most important matter of all. Here are some papers which young Lord

Strepp gave me to hold for him when we were comrades in France. I don't know what they are, having had very little time for reading during my life, but do you return them to him. Take them to him in England. He is now the great Earl of Westport, and he lives in London in a grand house, I hear. In the last campaign in France I had to lend him a pair of breeches, or he would have gone bare. These papers are important to him, and he may reward you; but do not you depend on it, for you may get the back of his hand. I have not seen him for years. I am glad I had you taught to read. They read considerably in England, I hear. There is one more cask of the best brandy remaining, and I recommend you to leave for England as soon as it is finished. And now, one more thing, my lad: Never be civil to a King's officer. Whenever you see a red-coat, depend there is a rogue between the front and the back of it. I have said everything. Push the bottle near me."

Three weeks after my father's burial, I resolved to set out with no more words, to deliver the papers to the Earl of Westport. I was resolved to be prompt in obeying my father's command, for I was extremely anxious to see the world, and my feet would hardly wait for me. I put my estate into the hands of old Mickey Clancy, and told him not to trouble the tenants too much over the rent, or they probably would split his skull for him; and I bid Father O'Donovan look out for Old Mickey that he stole from me only what was reasonable.



I went to the Cove of Cork and took ship there for Bristol, and arrived safely after a passage amid great storms, which blew us so near Glandore that I feared the enterprise of my own peasantry. Bristol, I confess, frightened me greatly. I had not imagined such a huge and teeming place. All the ships in the world seemed to be there, and the quays were thick with sailormen. The streets rang with noise. I suddenly found that I was a young gentleman from the country. I followed my luggage to the best inn, and it was very splendid—fit to be a bishop's palace. It was filled with handsomely dressed people, who all seemed to be yelling: "Landlord! landlord!" And there was a little fat man in a white apron, who flew about as if he were being stung by bees, and he was crying: "Coming, sir! Yes, madam! At once, your lordship!" They heeded me no more than if I had been an empty glass. I stood on one leg, waiting until the little fat man should either wear himself out, or attend all the people. But it was to no purpose. He did not wear out, nor did his business finish. So, finally, I was obliged to plant myself in his way; but my speech was decent enough as I asked him for a chamber. Would you believe it? He stopped abruptly and stared at me with sudden suspicion. My speech had been so civil that he had thought perhaps I was a rogue. I only give you this incident to show that if, later, I came to bellow like a bull with the best of them, it was only through the necessity of proving to strangers that I was a gentleman. I soon learned to enter an inn as a drunken soldier goes through the breach into a surrendering city.

Having made myself as presentable as possible, I came down from my chamber to seek some supper. The supper-room was ablaze with light and well filled with persons of quality, to judge from the noise they were making. My seat was next to a garrulous man in

plum-colour, who seemed to know the affairs of the entire world. As I dropped into my chair, he was saying:—

"... The heir to the title, of course. Young Lord Strepp. That is he—the slim youth with light hair. Oh, of course, all in shipping. The Earl must own twenty sail that trade from Bristol. He is posting down from London, by the way, to-night."

You can well imagine how these words excited me. I half arose from my chair, with the idea of going at once to the young man who had been indicated as Lord Strepp, and informing him of my errand, but I had a sudden feeling of timidity, a feeling that it was necessary to be proper with these people of high degree. I kept my seat, resolving to accost him directly after supper. I studied him with interest. He was a young man of about twenty years, with fair unpowdered hair and a face ruddy from a life in the open air. He looked generous and kindly, but just at the moment he was cursing a waiter in language that would have set fire to a stone bridge. Opposite him was a clear-eyed soldierly man of about forty, whom I heard called "Colonel," and at the Colonel's right was a proud, dark-skinned man, who kept looking in all directions to make sure that people regarded him, seated thus with a lord.

They had drunk eight bottles of port, and in those days eight bottles could just put three gentlemen in pleasant humour. As the ninth bottle came on the table, the Colonel cried:—

"Come, Strepp, tell us that story of how your father lost his papers. Gad, that's a good story."

"No, no," said the young lord. "'Tisn't a good story, and besides, my father never tells it at all. I misdoubt its truth."

The Colonel pounded the table. "'Tis true, 'tis too good a story to be false. You know the story, Forister?" said he, turning to the dark-skinned man. The latter shook his head.

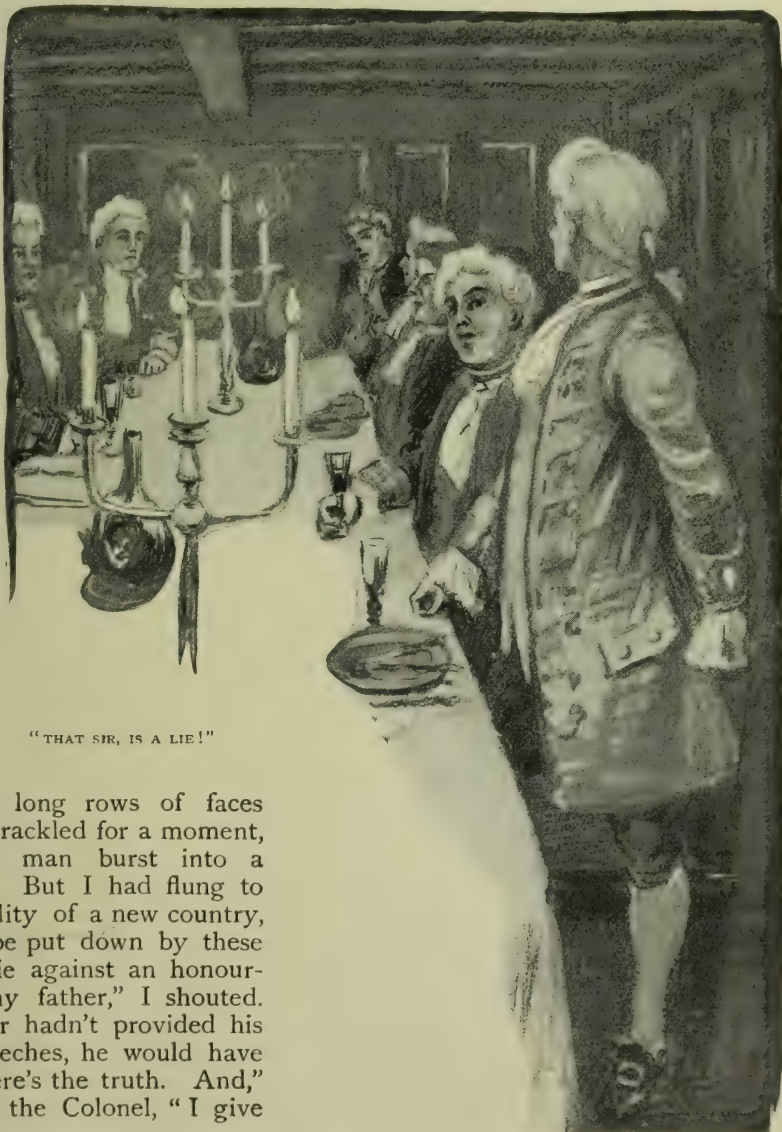
'Well, when the Earl was a young man serving with the French, he carried rather recklessly with him some valuable papers, relating to some estates in the South, and one day the noble Earl—or Lord Strepp he was then—found it necessary after fording a stream, to hang his breeches on a bush to dry, and then a certain blackguard of a wild Irishman in the corps came along and stole——”

But I had arisen and called loudly, but with dignity, up the long table: “That, sir, is a lie!” The room came still with a bang, if I may be allowed that expression. Everyone gaped at me, and the Colonel’s face slowly went the colour of a tiled roof. “My father never stole his lordship’s breeches, for the good reason that, at the time, his lordship had no breeches. ’Twas the other way. My father——”

Here the two long rows of faces lining the room crackled for a moment, and then every man burst into a thunderous laugh. But I had flung to the wind my timidity of a new country, and I was not to be put down by these clowns. “’Tis a lie against an honourable man and my father,” I shouted. “And if my father hadn’t provided his lordship with breeches, he would have gone bare, and there’s the truth. And,” said I, staring at the Colonel, “I give

the lie again. We are never obliged to give it twice in my country.”

The Colonel had been grinning a little, no doubt thinking along with everybody else in the room that I was drunk or crazy, but this last twist took the smile off his face clean enough, and he came to his feet with a bound. I awaited him. But young Lord Strepp



“THAT SIR, IS A LIE!”



and Forister grabbed him, and began to argue. At the same time there came down upon me such a deluge of waiters and pot-boys and, maybe, hostlers, that I couldn't have done anything if I had been an elephant. They were frightened out of their wits, and painfully respectful; but all the same and all the time they were bundling me toward the door. "Sir! sir! sir! I beg you, sir! Think o' the house, sir! Sir! sir! sir!" And I found myself out in the hall.

Here I addressed them calmly. "Loose me and take yourselves off quickly, lest I grow angry and break some dozen of these wooden heads." They took me at my word and vanished like ghosts. Then the landlord came bleating, but I merely told him that I was going to my chamber and if anybody enquired for me, I wished him conducted up at once.

In my chamber I had not long to wait. Presently there were steps in the corridor and a knock at my door. At my bidding the door opened and Lord Strepp entered. I arose and we bowed. He was embarrassed and rather dubious. "Aw," he began, "I come, sir, from Colonel Royale, who begs to be informed who he has had the honour of offending, sir?"

"'Tis not a question for your father's son, my lord," I answered, bluntly.

He looked at me and blushed and hesitated. "You are, then—" he asked at last. "You are, then, the son of The O'Ruddy?"

"No," said I, "I am The O'Ruddy. My father died a month gone and more."

"Oh," said he. And I now saw why he was embarrassed. He had feared from the beginning that I was altogether too much in the right. "Oh," said he again. I made up my mind that he was a good lad. "That is dif—" he began awkwardly. "I mean, Mr. O'Ruddy—oh, damn it all, you know what I mean, Mr. O'Ruddy."

I bowed. "Perfectly, my lord." I did not understand him of course.

"I shall have the honour to inform Colonel Royale that Mr. O'Ruddy is entitled to every consideration," he said more collectedly. "If Mr. O'Ruddy will have the goodness to await me here."

"Yes, my lord." He was going in order to tell the Colonel that I was a gentleman. And of course he returned quickly with the news. But he did not look as if the message was one which he could deliver with a glib tongue. "Sir," he began, and then halted. I could but courteously wait. "Sir, Colonel Royale bids me say that he is shocked to find that he has carelessly and publicly inflicted an insult upon an unknown gentleman through the memory of the gentleman's dead father. Colonel Royale bids me to say, sir, that he is overwhelmed with regret and that, far from taking an initial step himself, it is his duty to express to you his feeling that his movements should coincide with any arrangements you may choose to make."

I was obliged to be silent for a considerable period in order to gather head and tale of this marvellous sentence. At last I caught it. "At daybreak I shall walk abroad," I replied, "and I have no doubt that Colonel Royale will be good enough to accompany me. I know nothing of Bristol. Any cleared space will serve."

My young Lord Strepp bowed until he almost knocked his forehead on the floor. "You are most amiable, Mr. O'Ruddy. You, of course, will give me the name of some friend to whom I can refer minor matters?"

I found that I could lie in England as readily as ever I did in Ireland. "My friend will be on the ground with me, my lord, and as he also is a very amiable man it will not take two minutes to make everything clear and fair." Me, with not a friend in the world but Father O'Donovan and Mickey Clancy at Glandore!

Lord Strepp bowed again, the same as before. "Until the morning then, Mr. O'Ruddy," he said, and left me.

I sat me down on my bed to think. In truth, I was much puzzled and amazed. These gentlemen were actually reasonable and were behaving like men of heart. Neither my books nor my father's stories—great lies, many of them, God rest him!—had taught me that the duelling gentry could think at all, and I was quite certain that they never tried. "You are looking at me, sir?" "Was I, faith? Well, if I care to look at you, I shall look at you." And then away they would go at it, prodding at each other until somebody's flesh swallowed a foot of steel. "Sir, I do not like the colour of your coat." Clash! "Sir, red hair always offends me." Clang! "Sir, your fondness for rabbit pie is not polite." Cling!

However, the minds of young Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale seemed to be capable of a process which may be termed human reflection. It was plain that the Colonel did not like the situation at all, and perhaps considered himself the victim of a peculiarly exasperating combination of circumstances. That an Irishman should turn up in Bristol and give him the lie over a French pair of breeches must have seemed astonishing to him, notably when he learned that the Irishman was quite correct, having in short a clear title to speak authoritatively upon the matter of the breeches. And when Lord Strepp learned that I was The O'Ruddy, he saw clearly that the Colonel was in the wrong and that I had a perfect right to resent the insult to my father's memory. And so the Colonel probably said: "Look you, Strepp, I have no desire to kill this young gentleman because I insulted his father's name. It is out of all decency. And do you go to him this second time and see what may be done in the matter of avoidance. But, mark you, if he expresses any wishes, you of course offer immediate accommodation. I will not wrong him twice." And so up comes

my Lord Strepp and hems and haws in that way which puzzled me. A pair of thoughtful, honourable fellows, these, and I admired them greatly.

There was now no reason that I should keep my chamber since if I now met even the Colonel himself there would be no brawling, only bows. I was not indeed fond of these latter; replying to Lord Strepp had almost broken my back, but anyhow, more bows was better than more loud words and another downpour of waiters and pot-boys.

But I had reckoned without the dark-skinned man, Forister. When I arrived in the lower corridor and was passing through it on my way to take the air, I found a large group of excited people talking of the quarrel and the duel, it being known through Forister, no doubt, that the duel was to be fought at daybreak. I thought it was a great hubbub over a very small thing, but it seems that the mainspring of the excitement was the tongue of this black Forister. "Why, the Irish run naked through their native forests," he was crying. "Their sole weapon is the great knotted club, with which, however, they do not hesitate when in great numbers to attack lions and tigers. But how can this barbarian face the sword of an officer of His Majesty's army?"

Some in the group espied my approach, and there was a nudging of elbows. There was a general display of agitation, and I marvelled at the way in which many made it to appear that they had not formed part of the group at all. Only Forister was cool and insolent. He stared full at me and grinned, showing very white teeth. "Swords are very different from clubs—great knotted clubs," he said with admirable deliberation.

"Even so," rejoined I, gravely. "Swords are for gentlemen, while clubs are to clout the heads of rogues—thus." I boxed his ear with my open hand so that he fell against the wall. "I will



now picture also the use of boots by kicking you into the inn yard which is adjacent." So saying I hurled him to the great front door, which stood open, and then taking a sort of a hop and a skip, I kicked for glory and the saints. I do not know that I ever kicked a man with more success. He shot out as if he had been heaved by a catapult. There was a dreadful uproar behind me, and I expected every moment to be stormed by the waiter and pot-boy regiment. However, I could hear some of the gentlemen bystanders cry: "Well done! Well kicked! A record! A miracle!"

But my first hours on English soil contained still other festivities. Bright light streamed out from the great door, and I could plainly note what I shall call the arc of arcs described by Forister. He struck the railing once, but spun off it, and, to my great astonishment, went headlong and slap-crash into some sort of an upper servant who had been approaching the door with both arms loaded with cloaks, cushions and rugs.

I suppose the poor man thought that black doom had fallen upon him from the sky. He gave a great howl as he, Forister, the cloaks, cushions and rugs spread out grandly in one sublime confusion.

Some ladies screamed, and a bold commanding voice said: "In the devil's name, what have we here?" Behind the unhappy servant had been coming two ladies and a very tall gentleman in a black cloak that reached to his heels. "What have we here?" again cried this tall man who looked like an old eagle. He stepped up to me haughtily. I knew that I was face to face with the Earl of Westport.

But was I a man for ever in the wrong that I should always be giving down and walking away with my tail between my legs? Not I; I stood bravely to the Earl. "If your lordship pleases, 'tis The O'Ruddy kicking a blackguard into the yard," I made answer coolly.

I could see that he had been about to shout for the landlord and more waiters and pot-boys, but at my naming myself he gave a quick stare. "The O'Ruddy?" he repeated. "Rubbish!" He was startled, bewildered, but I could not tell if he was glad or grieved.

"'Tis all the name I own," I said placidly. "My father left me it clear, it being something that he could not mortgage. 'Twas on his death-bed that he told me of lending you the breeches, and that is why I kicked the man into the yard, and if your lordship had arrived sooner I could have avoided this duel at daybreak, and anyhow I wonder at his breeches fitting you. He was a small man."

Suddenly the Earl raised his hands. "Enough," he said sternly. "You are your father's son. Come to my chamber in the morning, O'Ruddy." There had been little chance to see what was inside the cloaks of the ladies, but at the words of the Earl, there peeped from one hood a pair of bright liquid eyes. God save us all; in a flash, I was no longer a free man; I was a dazed slave; the saints be good to us.

The contents of the other hood could not have been so interesting, for from it came a raucous voice, as of a bargeman with a cold. "Why did he kick him? Whom did he kick? Had he cheated at play? Where has he gone?"

The upper servant appeared, much battered, and holding his encrimsoned nose.

"My lord——" he began.

But the Earl roared at him:—

"Hold your tongue, rascal, and in future look where you are going, and don't get in a gentleman's way."

The landlord, in a perfect anguish, was hovering with his squadrons in the flanks. They could not think of pouncing upon me if I was noticed at all by the great Earl, but, somewhat as a precaution, perhaps, they remained in form for an attack. I had no wish that the pair of bright eyes should see me

buried under a heap of these wretches, so I bowed low to the ladies and to the Earl, and passed out of doors. As I left the Earl moved his hand to signify that he was now willing to endure the attendance of the landlord and his people, and in a moment the inn rang with hurried cries and rushing feet.

As I passed near the tap-room window, the light fell full upon a railing just beneath, and over this railing hung two men. At first I thought they were ill, but, upon passing near, I learned that they were simply limp, helpless with laughter, the sound of which they contrived to keep muffled. To my surprise, I recognised the persons of young Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale.

## II.

The night was growing, and, as I was to fight at daybreak, I needed a good rest; but I could not forget that, in my pride, I had told Lord Strepp that I was provided with a friend to attend me at the duel. It was on my mind. I must achieve a friend, or Colonel Royale might quite properly refuse to fight me on the usual grounds that if he killed me, there would be present no adherent of my cause to declare that the fight was fair. And, anyhow, I had lied so thoroughly to Lord Strepp. I must have a friend.

But how was I to carve a friend out of this black Bristol at such short notice? My sense told me that friends could not be found in the road like pebbles, but some curious feeling kept me abroad, scanning, by the light of the lanterns or the torches, each face that passed me. A low, dull roar came from the direction of the quays, and this was the noise of the sailor-men being drunk. I knew that there would be none found there to suit my purpose, but my spirit led me to wander so that I could not have told why I went this way or that way.

Of a sudden, I heard from a grassy bank beside me the sound of low and strenuous sobbing. I stopped dead

short to listen, moved by instinctive recognition. Aye, I was right. It was Irish keening. Some son of Erin was spelling out his sorrow to the darkness with that profound and garrulous eloquence which is in the character of my people.

"Wirra! wirra! Sorrow the day I would be leaving Ireland against my own will and intention, and may the rocks go out to meet the lugger that brought me here! It's beginning to rain, too. Sure, it never rains like this in Ireland, and me without a brass penny to buy a bed. If the saints save me from England, 'tis all——"

"Come out of that, now!" said I.

The monologue ceased. There was a quick silence. Then the voice, much altered, said:—

"Who calls? 'Tis maybe an Irish voice?"

"It is," said I. "I've swallowed as much peat smoke as any man of my years. Come out of that, now, and let me have a look at you."

He came trustfully enough, knowing me to be Irish, and I examined him as well as I was able in the darkness. He was what I expected—a bedraggled vagabond, with tear-stains on his dirty cheeks, and a vast shock of hair, which I well knew would look in daylight like a burning haystack. And as I examined him, he just as carefully examined me. I could see his shrewd blue eyes twinkling.

"You are a red man," said I. "I know the strain. 'Tis better than some. Your family must have been very inhospitable people." And then, thinking that I had spent enough time, I was about to give the fellow some coins and send him away. But here a mad project came into my empty head. I have ever been the victim of my powerful impulses, which surge up within me and sway me until I can only gasp at my own conduct. The sight of this red-headed scoundrel had thrust an idea into my head, and I was a lost man.



"Mark you," said I to him. "You know what I am?"

"'Tis hard to see in the dark," he answered; "but I mistrust you are a gentleman, sir. McDermott of the Three Trees had a voice and a way with him like you, and Father Burke, too, and he was a gentleman born, if he could only remain sober."

"Well, you've hit it, in the dark or whatever," said I. "I am a gentleman. Indeed, I am an O'Ruddy. Have you ever been hearing of my family?"

"Not of your honour's branch of it, sure," he made answer, confidently. "But I have often been hearing of the O'Ruddy's of Glandore, who are well-known to be such great robbers and blackguards that their match is not to be found in all the south of Ireland. Nor in the west either, for that matter."

"Aye," said I, "I have heard that branch of the family was much admired by the peasantry for their qualities. But let us have done with it and speak of other matters. I want a service of you."

"Yes, your honour," said he, dropping his voice. "Maybe, 'twill not be the first time I've been behind a ditch; but the light to-night is very bad, unless I am knowing him well, and I would never be forgetting how Tim Malone let fly in the dark of a night like this, thinking it was a bailiff, until she screamed out with the pain in her leg, the poor creature, and her beyond seventy and a good Catholic."

"Come out of it, now," said I, impatiently. "You will be behind no ditch." And as we walked back to the inn, I explained to my new man the part I wished him to play. He was amazed at it, and I had to explain fifty times; but when it was once established in his red head, Paddy was wild with enthusiasm, and I had to forbid him telling me how well he would do it.

I had them give him some straw in the stable, and then retired to my chamber for needed rest. Before dawn, I had them send Paddy to me, and by

the light of a new fire I looked at him. Ye saints! What hair! It must have been more than a foot in length, and the flaming strands radiated in all directions from an isolated and central spire which shot out straight towards the sky. I knew what to do with his tatters, but that crimson thatch dumbfounded me. However, there was no giving back now, and so I set to work upon him. Luckily, my wardrobe represented three generations of O'Ruddy clothes, and there was a great plenty. I put my impostor in a suit of blue velvet, with a flowered waistcoat and stockings of pink. I gave him a cocked hat and a fine cloak. I worked with success up to the sword-belt, and there I was checked. I had two swords, but only one belt. However, I slung the sword which King Louis had given my father on a long string from Paddy's neck, and sternly bid him keep his cloak tight about him. We were ready.

"Now, Paddy," said I, "do you bow in this manner." I bowed as a gentleman should. But I will not say how I strove with him. I could do little in that brief space. If he remained motionless and kept his tongue still he was somewhat near his part, but the moment he moved, he was astonishing. I depended upon keeping him under my eye, and I told him to watch me like a cat. "Don't go thinking how grand you are, that way," I cried to him angrily. "If you make a blunder of it, the gentlemen will cudgel you, mark you that. Do you as I direct you. And the string; curse you! Mind your cloak!" The villain had bethought him of his flowered waistcoat and, with a comic air, flung back his cloak to display it. "Take your fingers out of your mouth. Stop scratching your shin with your foot. Leave your hair alone. 'Tis as good and as bad as you can make it. Come along now, and hold your tongue like a graven image, if you would not be having me stop the duel to lather you."

We marched in good order out of the inn. We saw our two gentlemen awaiting us wrapped in their cloaks, for the dawn was cold. They bowed politely, and as I returned their salute I said in a low quick aside to Paddy: "Now, for the love of God, bow for your life!" My intense manner must have frightened the poor thing, for he ducked as swiftly as if he had been

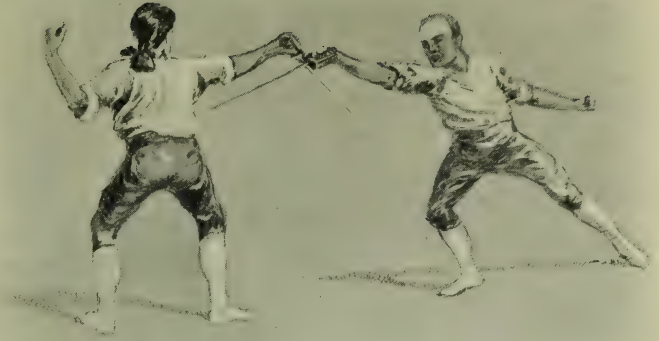
at a fair in Ireland and somebody had hove a cobble at his head. "Come up," I whispered, choking with rage. "Come up. You'll be breaking your nose on the road." He straightened himself, looking somewhat bewildered.

"What was it? Was I too slow? Did I do it well?"

"Oh, fine," said I, "fine. You do it as well as that once more and you will probably break your own neck, and 'tis not me that will be buying masses for your soul, you thief. Now don't drop as if a gamekeeper had shot at you, for there is no hurry in life. Be quiet and easy."

"I mistrusted I was going too fast," said he, "but for the life of me, I couldn't pull up. If I had been the Dublin mail and the road thick as fleas with highwaymen, I should have gone through them grand."

My Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale had not betrayed the slightest surprise at the appearance of my extraordinary companion. Their smooth regular faces remained absolutely imperturbable. This I took to be very considerate of them, but I gave them thus a little more than their due as I afterwards perceived when



*Portrait Gilbert  
1903*

"HE BESET ME IN A PERFECT FURY."

I came to understand the English character somewhat. The great reason was that Paddy and I were foreigners. It is not to be thought that gentlemen of their position would have walked out for a duel with an Englishman in the party of so fantastic an appearance. They would have placed him at once as a person impossible and altogether out of their class. They would have told a lackey to kick this preposterous creation into the horse pond. But since Paddy was a foreigner he was possessed of some curious license and his grotesque ways could be explained fully in a simple phrase: "'Tis a foreigner."

So then we preceded my Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale through a number of narrow streets and out into some clear country. I chose a fine open bit of green turf as a goodly place for us to meet, and I warped Paddy through the gate and moved to the middle of the field. I drew my sword and saluted and then turned away. I had told Paddy everything which a heaven-sent sense of instruction could suggest and if he failed I could do no more than kill him.



After I had kicked him sharply he went aside with Lord Strepp and they indulged in what sounded like a very animated discussion. Finally, I was surprised to find Lord Strepp approaching me. "Sir," he said, "you will pardon me. It is very irregular, but I seem unable to understand your friend. He has proposed to me that the man whose head is broken first—I do not perfectly understand what he could mean by that; it does not enter our anticipations that a man could possibly have his head broken—he has proposed that this man whose head may be broken first should provide 'lashings'—I feel sure that is the word—'lashings' of meat and drink at some good inn for the others. 'Lashings' is a word that I do not know. We do not know how to understand you gentlemen when you speak of 'lashings.' I am instructed to be glad to meet any terms which you may suggest, but I find that I cannot make myself clear to your friend who speaks of nothing but 'lashings.'"

"Sir," said I, as I threw coat and waistcoat on the grass, "my friend refers to a custom of his own country. You will, I feel sure, pardon his misconception of the circumstances. Pray accept my regrets and, if you please, I am ready."

He immediately signified that his mind was now clear and that the incident of Paddy's lashings he regarded as closed. As for that flame-headed imp of crime, if I could have got my hands upon him he would have taken a short road to his fathers. Him and his lashings! As I stood there with a black glare at him, the impudent scoundrel repeatedly winked at me with the readable intimation that if I would only be patient and bide a moment, he would compass something very clever. As I faced Colonel Royale I was so wild with thinking of what I would do to Paddy that, for all I knew, I might have been crossing swords with my mother!

And now as to the duel. I will not conceal that I was a very fine fencer in both the French and Italian manner. My father was in his day one of the best blades in Paris, and had fought with some of the most skilled and impertinent gentlemen in all France. He had done his best to give me his eye and his wrist, and sometimes he would say that I was qualified to meet all but the best in the world. He commonly made fun of the gentlemen of England, saying that a dragoon was their ideal of a man with a sword, and he would add that the rapier was a weapon which did not lend itself readily to the wood-chopper's art. He was all for the French and Italian schools.

I had always thought that my father's judgment was very good, but I could not help reflecting that if it turned out to be bad, I would have a grievance as well as a sword-thrust in the body. Colonel Royale came at me in a somewhat leisurely manner, and, as I said, my mind was so full of rage at Paddy that I met the first of my opponent's thrusts through sheer force of habit. But my head was clear a moment later, and I knew that I was fighting my first duel in England, and for my father's honour. It was no time to think of Paddy.

And at another moment later, I knew that I was the Colonel's master. I could reach him where I chose. But he did not know it. He went on prodding away with a serious countenance, evidently under the impression that he had me hard put to it. He was grave as an owl-faced parson. And now here I did a sorry thing. I became the victim of another of my mad impulses. I was seized with an ungovernable desire to laugh. It was hideous! But laugh I did and of necessity, square in the Colonel's face. And to this day I regret it.

Then the real duel began. At my laugh the Colonel instantly lost his

grave air, and his countenance flushed with high and angry surprise. He beset me in a perfect fury, caring no more for his guard than if he had been made of iron. Never have I seen such quick and tremendous change in a man. I had laughed at him under peculiar conditions; very well, then, he was a demon. Thrice my point pricked him to keep him off, and thrice my heart was in my mouth that he would come on regardless. The blood oozed out on his white ruffled shirt; he was panting heavily and his eyes rolled. He was a terrible sight to face. At last I again touched him, and this time sharply and in the sword arm, and upon the instant my Lord Strepp knocked our blades apart. "Enough," he cried, sternly. "Back, Colonel, back!" The Colonel flung himself sobbing into his friend's arms, choking out: "O, God, Strepp, I couldn't reach him! I couldn't reach him, Strepp! O, my God!" At the same time I disappeared, so to speak, in the embrace of my red-headed villain, who let out an Irish howl of victory that should have been heard at Glendore. "Be quiet, rascal!" I cried, flinging him off. But he went on with his howling until I was obliged to lead him forcibly to the corner of a field. "Oh, your honour, when I seen the other gentleman, all blazing with rage, rush at you that way, and me with not so much as a tuppence for all my service to you excepting these fine clothes and the sword—although I am thinking I shall have little to do with swords if this is the way they do it—I said, sorrow the day England saw me."

If I had a fool for a second, Colonel Royale had a fine, wise young man. Lord Strepp was dealing firmly and coolly with his maddened principal. "I can fight with my left hand!" the Colonel was screaming. "I tell you, Strepp, I am resolved! Don't bar my way! I will kill him! I will kill him!"

"You are not in condition to fight," said the undisturbed young man. "You

are wounded in four places already. You are in my hands. You will fight no more to-day."

"But, Strepp," wailed the Colonel. "Oh, my God, Strepp!"

"You fight no more, to-day," said the young lord.

Then happened unexpected interruptions. Paddy told me afterwards that during the duel a maid had looked over a wall, and yelled, and dropped a great brown bowl at sight of our occupation. She must have been the instrument that aroused the entire county, for suddenly men came running from everywhere. And the little boys! There must have been little boys from all over England. "What is it? What is it? Two gentlemen have been fighting! Oh, aye, look at him with the blood on him! Well, and there is young my Lord Strepp. He'd be deep in the matter, I warrant you! Look yon, Bill! Mark the gentleman with the red hair. He's not from these parts, truly. Where, think you, he comes from? 'Tis a great marvel to see such hair, and I doubt not he comes from Africa."

They did not come very near, for in those days there was little the people feared but a gentleman, and small wonder. However, when the little boys judged that the delay in the resumption of the fight was too prolonged, they did not hesitate to express certain unconventional opinions and commands. "Hurry up, now! Go on! You are both afeared! Begin, begin!" This rabble was such as I saw afterwards in the play-houses in London, and the little ruffians seemed to respect nothing. "Go on! Begin, begin! Are the gentlemen in earnest? Sirs, do you mean ever to fight again? Begin, begin!" But their enthusiasm waxed high after they had thoroughly comprehended Paddy and his hair. "You're a-light, sir; you're a-light! Water! water! Aye, Farmer Pelton will have the officers at you, an' you go near his hay. Water!"



Paddy understood that they were paying tribute to his importance, and again he went suddenly out of my control. He began to strut and caper and pose with the air of knowing that he was the finest gentleman in England. "Paddy, you baboon," said I, "be quiet, and don't be making yourself a laughing stock for the whole of them." But I could give small heed to him for I was greatly occupied in watching Lord Strepp and the Colonel. The Colonel was listening now to his friend, for the simple reason that the loss of blood had made him too weak to fight again. Of a sudden, he slumped gently down through Lord Strepp's arms to the ground, and, as the young man knelt, he cast his eyes about him until they rested upon me, in what I took to be mute appeal. I ran forward, and we quickly tore his fine ruffles to pieces, and succeeded in quite staunching his wounds, none of which were serious. "Tis only a little blood letting," said my Lord Strepp, with something of a smile. "'Twill cool him, perchance."

"None of them are deep," I cried, hastily. "I——"

But Lord Strepp stopped me with a swift gesture. "Yes," he said, "I knew. I could see. But——" He looked at me with troubled eyes. "It is an extraordinary situation. You have spared him, and—he will not wish to be compelled to be spared, I feel sure. Most remarkable case."

"Well, I won't kill him," said I, bluntly, having tired of this rubbish. "Damme if I will."

Lord Strepp laughed outright. "It is ridiculous," he said. "Do you return, O'Ruddy, and leave me the care of this business. And," added he, with an embarrassed manner, "this mixture is full strange—but—I feel sure—anyhow, I salute you, sir." And in this bow he paid a sensible tribute to my conduct.

Afterward there was naught to do but gather in Paddy and return to the inn. I found my countryman swagger-

ing to and fro before the crowd. Some ignoramus, or some wit, had dubbed him the King of Ireland and he was playing to the part.

"Paddy, you red-headed scandal," said I, "come along now."

When he heard me, he came well enough, but I could not help but feel from his manner that he had made a great concession. As we walked back toward the inn, I admonished him so severely that he gave over most of his high airs, but not without commentary. "And so they would be taking me for the king of Ireland, and, sure, 'tis an advantage to be thought a king whatever and if your honour would be easy, 'tis you and I that would sleep in the finest beds in Bristol the night and nothing to do but take the drink as it was handed and—I'll say no more."

A rabble followed us on our way to the inn, but I turned on them so fiercely from time to time that ultimately they ran off. We made direct for my chamber, where I ordered food and drink immediately to be served. Once alone there with Paddy I allowed my joy to take hold upon me. "Eh, Paddy, my boy," said I, walking before him, "I have done grand. I am, indeed, one of the finest gentlemen in the world."

"Aye, that's true," he answered, "but, there was a man at your back throughout who——"

To his extreme astonishment I buffeted him heavily upon the cheek. "And we'll have no more of that talk," said I.

### III.

"Aye," said Paddy, holding his jowl, "'tis what one gets for serving a gentleman. 'Tis the service of a good faithful blackguard I'd be looking for and that's true for me."

"Be quiet and mind what I tell you," I cried to him. "I'm uplifted with my success in England, and I won't be hearing anything from you while I am saying that I am one of the grandest gentlemen in all the world. I came



"I GALLOPED OUT OF THE INN YARD."



over here with papers—papers,” said I, and then I bethought me that I would take the papers and wave them in my hand. I don’t know why people wish to wave important documents in their hands, but the impulse came to me. Above all things, I wished to take these papers and wave them defiantly, exultantly in the air. These papers were my inheritance and my land of promise; they were everything. I must wave them even to the chamber, empty save for Paddy.

When I reached for them in the proper place in my luggage they were gone. I whirled like a tiger upon Paddy. “Villain,” I roared, grasping him by the throat, “you have them!”

He sank in full surrender to his knees. “I have, your honour,” he wailed, “but sure, I never thought your honour would care since one of them is badly worn at the heel and the other is no better than no boot at all.”

I was cooled by the incontestable verity of this man. I sat heavily down in a chair by the fire. “Aye,” said I stupidly, “the boots? I did not mean the boots, although when you took them passes my sense of time. I mean some papers.”

“Some papers!” cried he, excitedly. “Your honour never thought it would be me that would steal papers? Nothing less than good cows would do my people and a bit of turf now and then but papers——”

“Peace,” said I, sombrely, and began to search my luggage thoroughly for my missing inheritance. But it was all to no purpose. The papers were not there. I could not have lost them. They had been stolen. I saw my always-flimsy inheritance melt away. I had been, I thought, on the edge of success, but I now had nothing but my name, a successful duel and a few pieces of gold. I was buried in defeat.

Of a sudden a name shot through my mind. The name of this black Forister was upon me so violently and yet with

perfect sureness. It was he who had stolen the papers. I knew it. I felt it in every bone. He had taken the papers.

I have been told since that it is very common for people to be moved by these feelings of omen, which are invariably correct in their particulars, but at the time I thought it odd that I should be so certain that Forister had my papers. However, I had no time to waste in thinking. I grasped my pistols. “A black man—black as the devil,” cried I to Paddy. “Help me catch a little black man.”

“Sure,” said Paddy, and we sallied forth. In a moment I was below and crying to the landlord in as fine a fury as any noble. “This villain, Forister! And where be he?”

The landlord looked at me with bulging eyes. “Master Forister,” he stammered. “Aye—aye—he’s been a-gone these many hours since your lordship kicked him. He took horse, he did, for Bath, he did.”

“Horses!” I roared. “Horses for two gentlemen!” And the stable yard, very respectful since my duel, began to ring with cries. The landlord pled something about his bill, and in my impatience I hurled to him all of my gold save one piece. The horses came soon enough, and I leaped into the saddle and was away to Bath after Forister. As I galloped out of the inn yard I heard a tumult behind me, and, looking back, I saw three ostlers lifting hard at Paddy to raise him into the saddle. He gave a despairing cry when he perceived me leaving him at such speed, but my heart was hardened to my work. I must catch Forister.

It was a dark and angry morning. The rain swept across my face and the wind flourished my cloak. The road, glistening steel and brown, was no better than an Irish bog for hard riding. Once I passed a chaise with a flogging post-boy and steaming nags. Once I overtook a farmer jogging somewhere

on a fat mare. Otherwise I met no travellers.

I was near to my journey's end when I came to a portion of the road which dipped down a steep hill. At the foot of this hill was an oak tree, and under the tree was a man masked and mounted, and in this man's hand was a levelled pistol. "Stand," he said, "stand." I knew his meaning.

But when a man has lost a documentary fortune and given an inn-keeper all but his last guinea, he is sure to be filled with fury at the appearance of a third and completing misfortune. With a loud shout, I drew my pistol and rode like a demon at the highwayman. He fired, but his bullet struck nothing but the flying tails of my cloak. As my horse crashed into him I struck at his pate with my pistol. An instant later we both came a mighty downfall, and when I could get my eyes free of stars, I arose and drew my sword. The highwayman sat before me on the ground ruefully handling his skull. Our two horses were scampering away into the mist.

I placed my point at the highwayman's throat. "So, my fine fellow," cried I, grandly, "you rob well. You are the principal knight of the road of all England, I would dare say, by the way in which an empty pistol overcomes you."

He was still ruefully handling his skull. "Aye," he muttered, sadly, more to himself than to me, "a true knight of the road with seven ballads written of me in Bristol and three in Bath. Ill betide me for not minding my mother's word and staying at home this day. 'Tis all the unhappy luck of Jem Bottles. I should have remained an honest sheep-stealer and never engaged in this dangerous and nefarious game of lifting purses."

The man's genuine sorrow touched me. "Cheer up, Jem Bottles," said I. "All may yet be well. 'Tis not one little bang on the crown that so disturbs you?"

"'Tis not one—no," he answered gloomily. "'Tis two. The traveller riding to the east before you dealt me a similar blow!"

"Black!" cried I. "Forister, for my life!"

"He took no moment to tell me his name," responded the sullen and wounded highwayman. "He beat me out of the saddle and rode away as brisk as a bird. I know not what my mother will say. She be for ever telling me of the danger in this trade, and here come two gentlemen in one day and unhorse me without the profit of a sixpence to my store. When I became a highwayman I thought me I had profited me from the low estate of a sheep-stealer, but now I see that happiness in this life does not altogether depend upon——"

"Enough," I shouted in my impatience. "Tell me of the black man! The black man, worm!" I pricked his throat with my sword very carefully.

"He was black and he rode like a demon, and he handled his weapons finely," said Jem Bottles. "And since I have told you all I know please, good sir, move the point from my throat. This will be ill news for my mother."

I took thought with myself. I must on to Bath, but the two horses had long since scampered out of sight, and my pursuit of the papers would make small way afoot. "Come, Jem Bootles," I cried, "help me to a horse in a comrade's way and for the sake of your mother. In another case, I will leave you here a bloody corpse. Come; there's a good fellow."

He seemed moved to help me. "Now, if there comes a well-mounted traveller," he said, brightening, "I will gain his horse for you if I die for it."

"And if there comes no well-mounted traveller?"

"I know not, sir. But—perhaps he will come."

"'Tis a cheap rogue who has but one horse," I observed contemptuously.



"You are only a footpad, a simple-minded marquis of the bludgeon."

Now, as I had hoped, this deeply cut his pride. "Did I not speak of the ballads, sir?" he demanded with considerable spirit. "Horses? Aye, and have I not three good nags hid behind my mother's cottage which is less than a mile from this spot?"

"Monsieur Jem Bottles," said I, not forgetting the French manners which my father had taught me, "unless you instantly show me the way to these horses, I shall cut off your hands, your feet and your head. Do you understand my intention, Monsieur Jem Bottles?"

"Sir," he begged, "think of my mother."

"I think of the horses," I answered grimly. "'Tis for you to think of your mother. How could I think of your mother when I wouldn't know her from the Head of Kinsole if it didn't happen that I knew the Head of Kinsole too well to mistake it for anybody's mother?"

"You speak like a man from foreign parts, sir," he rejoined in a meek voice; "but I am able to see your meaning is serious."

"'Tis so serious," said I, rapping him gently on the head with the butt of my pistol, "that if you don't instantly display a greedy activity you will display a perfect inability to move."

"The speeching is obscure," said he, "but the rap on the head is clear to me. Still, it was not kind of you to hit me on the same spot twice."

He now arose from his mournful seat on the ground and, still rubbing his pate, he asked me to follow him. We moved from the highway into a very narrow lane, and for some time proceeded in silence. "'Tis a regular dog's life," spoke Jem Bottles, after a period of reflection

By this time, I had grown a strong sympathy for my scoundrel. "Come, cheer yourself, Jem Bottles," said I. "I

have known many a lesser ruffian who was hanged until he was dry, whereas you march along the lane with nought to your discouragement but three cracks in your crown."

"'Tis not the cracks in the crown," he answered. "'Tis what my mother will say."

"I had no thought that highwaymen had mothers," said I. I had resolved now to take care of his pride, for I saw that he was bound to be considered a great highwayman, and I did not wish to disturb his feelings until I gained possession of one of the horses.

But now he grew as indignant as he dare. "Mother? Mother, sir? I say to you flat in your face, even if you kill me the next instant, that I have a mother. Perchance I am not of the lofty gentry who go about beating honest highwaymen to the earth, but I repulse with scorn any man's suggestion that I have no mother. In the quarter of an hour you shall see my mother for yourself."

"Peace, Jem Bottles," said I, soothingly. "I took no thought of such a thing. I would be thinking only of the ballads, and how honourable it is that a gallant and dashing life should be celebrated in song. I, for certain, have never done anything to make a pot-house ring with my name, and I liken you to the knights of olden days who tilted in all simple fair bravery without being able to wager a brass farthing as to who was right and who was wrong."

Soon a lighted window of the highwayman's humble home shone out in the darkness, and a moment later Jem Bottles was knocking at the door. It was immediately opened, and he stalked in with his blood marks still upon his face. There was a great outcry in one feminine voice, and a large woman rushed forward and flung her arms about the highwayman. "Oh! Jemmie, my son, my son," she screamed, "whatever have they done to ye this time?"

"Silence, mother dear," said Bottles.

"'Tis nought but a wind-broken bough fallen on my head. Have you no manners? Do you not see the gentleman waiting to enter and warm himself?"

The woman turned upon me alarmed but fiery and defiant. After a moment's scrutiny, she demanded: "Oh, no, and the gentleman had nought to do of course with my poor Jem's broken head?"

"'Tis a priest but newly arrived from his native island of Asia," said Bottles, piously, "and it ill beseems you, mother dear, to be haggling when you might be getting the holy man and I some supper."

"True, Jemmie, my own," responded Dame Bottles. "But there are so many rogues abroad that you must forgive your old mother if she grow often affrighted that her good Jemmie has been misled." She turned to me. "Pardon, my good gentleman," she said, almost in tears. "Ye little know what it is to be the mother of a high-spirited boy."

"I can truthfully say that I do not, Dame Bottles," said I, with one of my father's French bows. She was immensely pleased. Any woman may fall a victim to a limber, manly and courteous bow.

Presently we sat down to a supper of plum-stew and bread. Bottles had washed the blood from his face, and now resembled an honest man.

"You may think it strange, sir," said Dame Bottles, with some housewifely embarrassment, "that a highwayman of such distinction that he has had written of him in Bristol six ballads——"



"UNDER THE TREE WAS A MAN MASKED AND MOUNTED, AND IN THIS MAN'S HAND WAS A LEVELLED PISTOL."

"Seven," said the highwayman.

"Seven in Bristol and in Bath two——"

"Three," said the highwayman.

"And three in Bath," continued the old woman. "You may think it strange, sir, that a highwayman of such distinction that he has had written of him in Bristol seven ballads and in Bath three, and yet is obliged to sit down to a supper of plum-stew and bread."

"Where is the cheese I took on



Michaelmas?" demanded Bottles, suddenly.

"Jemmie," answered his mother with reproach, "you know you gave the last of it to the crippled shepherd over on the big hill."

"So I did, mother dear," assented the highwayman, "and I regret now that I let no less than three cheeses pass me on the highway because I thought we had plenty at home."

"If you let anything pass on the road because you do not lack it at the moment, you will ultimately die of starvation, Jemmie dear," quoth the mother. "How often have I told you?"

"Aye," he answered somewhat irritably, "you also often have told me to take snuff-boxes."

"And was I at fault," she retorted, "because the cheating avarice of the merchants led them to make sinful paltry snuff-boxes that were mere pictures of the good old gold and silver? Was it my mischief? Or was it the mischief of the plotting swineherds who now find it to their interest to deal in base and imitative metals?"

"Peace, my mother," said the highwayman. "The gentleman here has not the same interest in snuff-boxes which moves us to loud speech."

"True," said Dame Bottles, "and I readily wish that my Jemmie had no reason to care if snuff-boxes were made from cabbage-leaves."

I had been turning a scheme in my mind, and here I thought I saw my opportunity to introduce it. "Dame Bottles," said I, "your words fit well with the plan which has brought me here to your house. Know you then that I am a nobleman."

"Alack, poor Jemmie," cried the woman, raising her hands.

"No," said I, "I am not a nobleman rampant. I am a nobleman in trouble, and I need the services of your son, for which I will reward him with such richness that he will not care if they make

snuff-boxes out of water or wind. I am in pursuit of a man——"

"The little black man?" cried the alert Bottles.

"And I want your son to ride with me to catch this thief. He need never pass through the shadow of the creaking, clanking tree. He will be on an honest hunt to recover a great property. Give him to me. Give him fourteen guineas from his store and bid us mount his horses and away, Save your son!"

The old woman burst into tears. "Sir," she answered, "I know little of you, but, as near as I can see in the light of this one candle, you are an angel. Take my boy! Treat him as you would your own step-son, and if snuff-boxes ever get better I will let you both hear of it."

Less than an hour later, Jem Bottles and I were off for Bath, riding two very good horses.

#### IV.

Now my whole mind was really bent on finding my black Forister, but yet as Jem Bottles and I rode towards Bath I thought of a cloaked figure, a pair of shining eyes, and it seemed to me that I recalled the curve of sweet proud lips. I knew that I should be thinking of my papers, my future; but a quick perversity made me dwell for a long trotting time in a dream of feminine excellence, in a dream of feminine beauty. I know hardly how to say that two eyes, a vision of lips, a conception of a figure, should properly move me as I bounced along the road with Jem Bottles. But it is certain that it came upon me. The eyes of the daughter of the great Earl of Westport had put in chains the redoubtable O'Ruddy. It was true. It was clear. I admitted it to myself. The admission caused a number of reflections to occur to my mind, and the chief of these was that I was a misfortunate wretch.

Jem Bottles recalled me to the immediate business. "'Tis the lights of

Bath, sir," he said, "and if it please you, sir, I shall await you under yonder tree since the wretched balladists have rendered me so well-known in the town that I dare not venture in it for fear of a popular welcome from the people who have no snuff-boxes whatever."

"I will go and listen to the ballads," I replied, "and in the meantime do you await me here under that tree." So saying I galloped into Bath, my soul sharp to find Forister and to take him by the neck and strangle out of him those papers which were my sole reason for living. But the landlord of the best inn met me with an unmistakable frankness. "Mr. Forister?" said he. "Yes, your lordship, but Mr. Forister is gone back to Bristol."

I was so pleased with his calling me "your lordship" that I hesitated a moment. I was almost resolved to delay for a time at this charming inn. But I was recalled to sense by the thought that although Jem Bottles and I had fifteen guineas between us, he had fourteen and I had the one. Thanking the landlord I galloped out of Bath.

Bottles was awaiting me under the tree. "To Bristol!" I cried. "Our chase lies toward Bristol. He has doubled back."

"'Twas while we were at supper," said Bottles, as he cantered up to my shoulder. "I might have had two trials at him if I had not had the honour of meeting your worship. I warrant you, sir, he would not have escaped me twice."

"Think of his crack in your skull and be content," I replied. "And in the meantime ride for Bristol."

Within five miles of Bristol we came upon a wayside inn in which there was progressing a great commotion. Lights flashed from window to window, and we could hear women howling. To my great surprise, Bottles at once became hugely excited. "Damme, sir," he shouted, "my sweetheart is a chambermaid here, and if she be hurt, I will know it." He spurred valiantly forward,

and after furtively calling to him to check his career, I followed. He leaped from his horse at the door of the inn and bounced into the place pistol in hand. I was too confused to understand much, but it seemed to my ears that his entrance was hailed with a roar of relief and joy. A stable-boy, tearfully anxious, grasped my bridle, crying: "Go in, sir, in God's name. They will be killing each other." Taking that, whatever betide, it was proper to be at the back of my friend Bottles, I, too, sprang from my horse and popped into the inn.

A more unexpected sight never met my experienced gaze. A fat landlady, mark you, was sobbing in the arms of my villainous friend and a pretty maid was clinging to his arm and screaming. At the same time there were about him a dozen people of both sexes, who were yelling: "Oh, pray, Master Bottles! Good Master Bottles, do stop them! One is a great Afric chief, red as a fire, and the other is Satan—Satan himself! Oh, pray, good Master Bottles, stop them!"

My fine highwayman was puffed out like a poisoned frog. I had had no thought that he could be so grand. "What is this disturbance?" he demanded in a bass voice.

"Oh, good Master Bottles," clamoured the people. "Satan wishes to kill the Red Giant, who has Satan barred in the best room in the inn, and they make frightful destruction of chairs and tables. Bid them cease, oh, good Master Bottles!"

From overhead we could hear the sound of blows upon wood mingling with threatening talk. "Stand aside," said the highwayman in a great gruff voice which made me marvel at him. He unhesitatingly dumped the swooning form of the landlady into another pair of arms, shook off the pretty maid, and moved sublimely upon the foot of the stairs amid exclamations of joy, wonder, admiration, even reverence.



But the voice of an unseen person hailed suddenly from the head of the stairs. "And if ye have not said enough masses for your heathen souls," remarked the voice, "you would be better mustering the neighbours this instant to go to church for you, and bid them do the best they can in a short time. You will never be coming downstairs if you once come up."

Bottles hesitated: the company shuddered out: "'Tis the Red Giant!"

"And I would be having one more word with you," continued the unseen person. "I have him here, and here I keep him. 'Tis not me that wants the little black rogue, what with his hammering on the door and his calling me out of my name. 'Tis no work that I like, and I would lever go in and put my heel in his face. But I was told to catch a little black man, and I have him and him I will keep. 'Tis not me that wished to come here and catch little black men for anybody; but here I am in this foreign country catching little black men, and I will have no interference."

But here I gave a great call of recognition. "Paddy!" I saw the whole thing. This wild-headed Paddy whom I had told to catch me a little black man had followed after me toward Bath, and somehow managed to barricade in a room the very first man he saw who was small and black. At first I wished to laugh; an instant later I was furious. "Paddy," I thundered, "come down out of that now! What would you be doing? Come down out of that now!"

The reply was sulky but unmistakably from Paddy. Most of it was mumbled. "Sure I've gone and caught as little and as black a man as is in the whole world, and was keeping the scoundrel here safe, and along he comes and tells me to come down out of that now with no gratitude. And yet I fought a duel for him and managed everything so finely that he came away

well enough to box me on the ear, which was mere hilarity, and means nothing between friends."

Jem Bottles was still halted on the stairs. He and all the others had listened to Paddy's speeches in a blank amazement which had much superstition in it. "Shall I go up, sir?" he asked, not eagerly.

"No," said I. "Leave me to deal with it. I fear a great mistake. Give me ten minutes, and I promise to empty the inn of all uproar."

A murmur of admiration arose, and, as the sound leaped about my ears, I moved casually and indifferently up against Paddy. It was a grand scene.

"Paddy," I whispered, as soon a distance on the stairs, safe from the ears of the people below; "Paddy, you have made a great blunder. You have the wrong man!"

"'Tis unlikely," replied Paddy, with scorn. "You wait until you see him, and if he is not little and black, then——"

"Yes, yes," said I, hastily; "but it was not any little black man at all which I wanted. It was a particular little black man."

"But," said the ruffian, brightly, "it would be possible this one will serve your end. He's little and he's black——"

At this moment the voice of the captive came intoning through the door of the chamber.

"When I am free, I will first cut you in pieces, and then——"

Paddy had stepped forward and placed his lips within six inches of one of the panels.

"Come now, be easy," he said. "You know well that if you should do as you say, I would beat your head that it would have the look of a pudding fallen from a high window, and that's the truth."

"Open the door, rascal," called the captive, "and we shall see."

"I will be opening no doors," retorted Paddy, indignantly. "Remain quiet,

you little black devil, or, by the mass, I'll——"

"I'll slice your heart into pieces of paper!" thundered Paddy's prisoner, kicking and pounding.

By this time I was ready to interfere.

"Paddy," said I, catching him by the shoulder, "you have the wrong man. Leave it to me, mind you. Leave it to me."

"He's that small and black, you'd think——" he began dejectedly, but I cut him short.

Jem Bottles, unable to endure the suspense, had come up from below. He was still bristling and blustering, as if all the maids were remarking him.

"And why does this fine gentleman kick and pound on the door?" he demanded, in a gruff voice loud enough to be heard in all appreciative parts of the inn. "I'll have him out and slit his nose!"

The thunder on the door ceased, and the captive observed:—

"Ha! another scoundrel. If my ears do not play me false, there are now three waiting for me to kick them to the hangman."

Restraining Paddy and Bottles, who each wished to reply in heroic verse to this sally, I stepped to the door.

"Sir," said I, civilly, "I fear a great blunder has been done. I——"

"Why," said the captive, with a sneer, "'tis the Irishman—'tis the king of the Irelands. Open the door, pig!"

Myelation knew no bounds. "Paddy!" cried I, "you have the right little black man." But there was no time for celebration. I must first answer my enemy. "You will remember that I kicked you once," said I, "and, if you have a memory as long as my finger, be careful! I do not kick you again, else even people as far away as the French will think you are a meteor. But I would not be bandying words at long range. Paddy, unbar the door."

"And if I can," muttered Paddy, fumbling with a lot of machinery, so

ingenious that it would require a great lack of knowledge to thoroughly understand it. In the meantime, we could hear Forister move away from the door, and, by the sound of a leisurely scrape of a chair on the floor, I judged he had taken seat somewhere near the centre of the room. Bottles was handling his pistol, and regarding us.

"Yes," said I, "if he fires, do you pepper him fairly. Otherwise, await my orders. Paddy, you slug, unbar the door."

"If I am able," said Paddy, still muttering and fumbling with his contrivances. He had no sooner mouthed the words than the door flew open as if by magic, and we discovered a room bright with the light of a fire and candles. Forister was seated negligently at a table in the centre of the room. His legs were crossed, but his naked sword lay on the table at his hand. He had the first word, because I was amazed, almost stunned, by the precipitous opening of the door.

"Ho, ho," he observed, frigidly, "'tis, indeed, the king of the Irelands, accompanied by the red-headed duke who has entertained me for some time, and a third party with a thief's face, who handles a loaded pistol with such abandon as leads me to suppose that he once may have been a highwayman. A very pretty band."

"Use your tongue for a garter, Forister," said I. "I want my papers."

## V.

"Your 'papers'?" said Forister. "Damn you and your 'papers.' What would I know of your 'papers'?"

"I mean," said I, fiercely, "the papers you stole out of my chamber in the inn at Bristol."

The man actually sank back in his chair, and laughed me up to the roof. "'Papers'!" he shouted. "Here's the king of the Irelands thinking that I have made off with his papers! Ha, ha, ha!"



"You choose a good time for laughing," said I, with more sobriety. "In a short time you will be laughing with the back of your head."

He sat up, and looked at me with quick decision. "Now, what is all this rubbish about 'papers'?" he said, sharply. "What have I to do with your filthy 'papers'? I had one intention regarding you. Of that I am certain. I was resolved to kill you on the first occasion when we could cross swords; but—'papers'—faugh! What do you mean?"

The hoarse voice of Jem Bottles broke in from somewhere behind me. "We might easily throw him to the earth, and tie him, sir, and then make search of him."

"And you would know how to go about the business, I warrant me," laughed Forister. "You muzzle-faced rogue, you!"

To my astonishment, the redoubtable highwayman gave back before the easy disdain of this superior scoundrel.

"My ways may not always have been strait and narrow, master," he rejoined, almost in a whine, "but you have no call to name me muzzle-faced."

Forister turned from him contemptuously, and fixed his regard with much enthusiasm upon Paddy. "Very red," said he, "very red indeed. And thick as faggots, too. A very delectable head of hair, fit to be spun into a thousand blankets for the naked savages in heathen parts. The wild forests of Ireland must indeed be dark when it requires a lantern of this measure to light the traveller on his way."

But Paddy was an honest man, even if he did not know it, and he at once walked to Forister and held against his ear a fist the size of a pig's hind leg.

"I cannot throw the talk back to you," he said. "You are too fast for me; but I tell you to your face that you had better change your tongue for a lock of an old witch's hair, unless you intend to be battered this moment."

"Peace," said Forister, calmly. "I am a man of natural wit, and I would entertain myself. Now, there is your excellent chieftain, the king of the Irelands. He I regard as a very good specimen, whose ancestors were not very long ago swinging by their tails from the lofty palms of Ireland, and playing with cocoanuts to and fro."

He smiled and leaned back, well satisfied with himself.

All this time I had been silent, because I had been deep in a reflection on Forister. Now I said:—

"Forister, you are a great rogue. I know you. One thing is certain: you have not my papers, and never did you have them."

He looked upon me with some admiration. "Aye, the cannibal shows a glimmer of reason," he cried. "No, I have not your foolish papers, and I only wish I had them in order to hurl the bundle at your stupid head."

"For a kicked man you have a gay spirit," I replied. "But at any rate, I have no time for you now. I am off to Bristol after my papers, and I only wish, for the sake of ease, and I had to go no farther than this chamber. Come, Paddy. Come, Jem."

My two henchmen were manifestly disappointed; they turned reluctantly at my word.

"Have I the leave of one crack at him, your honour?" whispered Paddy, earnestly. "He said my head was a lantern."

"No," said I, "leave him to his meditations."

As we passed down the corridor, we heard him laugh loudly, and he called out to me:—

"When I come to Bristol, I will kill you."

I had more than a mind to go back and stuff his threat into his throat, but I better knew my business. My business was to recover the papers.

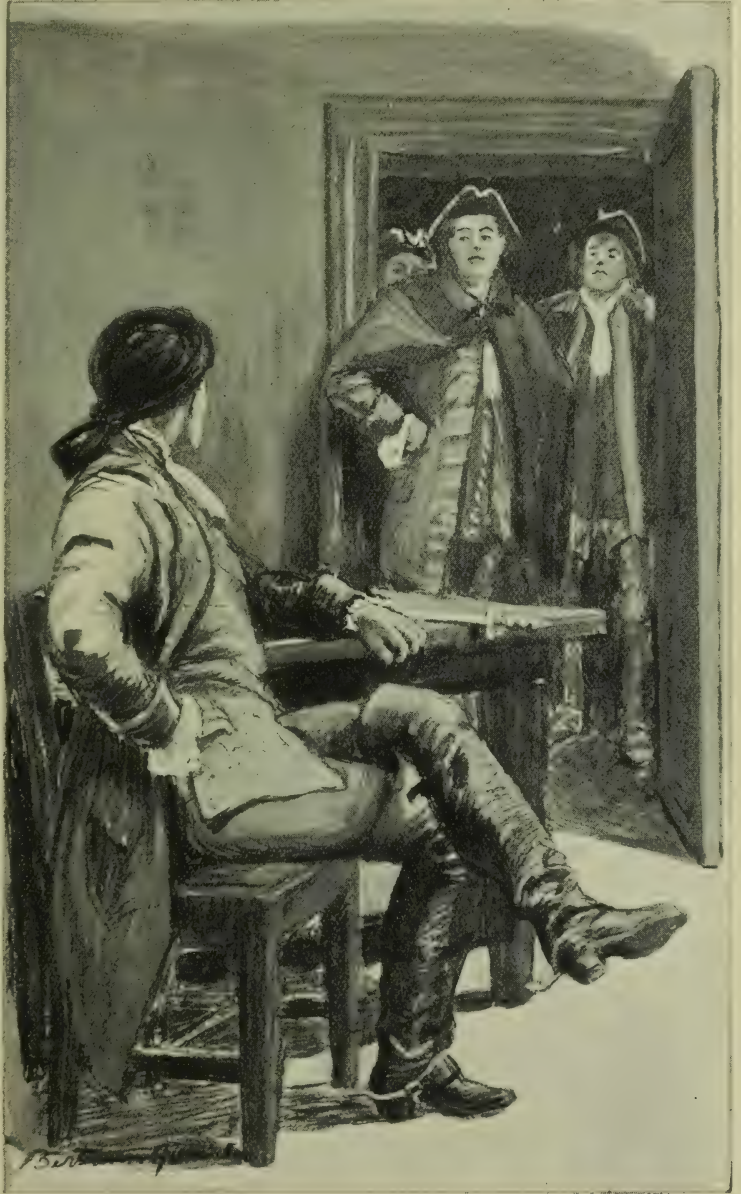
"Come!" said I, and we passed downstairs.

The people of the inn made way for Paddy as if he had been a falling tree, and at the same time they worshipped Jem Bottles for having performed everything. I had some wonder as to which would be able to outstrut the other. I think Jem Bottles won the match, for he had the advantage of being known as one of the most dangerous men in south-western England, whereas Paddy had only his own vanity to help him.

"'Tis all arranged," said Bottles, pompously. "Your devil will come forth as quiet as a rabbit."

We ordered our horses, and a small crowd of obsequious stable-boys rushed to fetch them. I marvelled when I saw them lead out Paddy's horse. I had thought from what I perceived over my shoulder when I left Bristol, that he would never be able to make a half-league in the saddle. Amid the flicker of lanterns, Bottles and I mounted, and then I heard Paddy calling to him all the stable-boys. "Now, when I give the word, you heave for your lives. Stand, you beast. Cannot four of you hold him by the legs? I

will be giving the word in a moment. Are you all ready? Well, then, now, for your lives! Wait a bit. You there with the round face, will not you see that one of my feet is caught in the stirrup? Well,



"'USE YOUR TONGUE FOR A GAR'ER, FORISTER,' SAID I. 'I WANT MY PAIERS.'"



now! ready again — heave!” There was a short scuffle in the darkness, and presently Paddy appeared above the heads of the others in the *melée*. “There now,” said he to them, “that was well done. One would easily be telling that I was an ex-trooper of the King.” He rode out to us complacently. “’Tis a good horse, if only he steered with a tiller instead of these straps,” he remarked, “and he goes well before the wind.”

“To Bristol,” said I. “Paddy, you must follow as best you may. I have not time to be watching you, although you are interesting.”

An unhappy cry came from behind as Bottles and I spurred on, but again I could not wait for my faithful fellow-countryman. My papers were still the stake for which I played. However, I hoped that Paddy would now give over his ideas about catching little black men.

As we neared Bristol, Jem Bottles once more became backward. He referred to the seven ballads, and feared that the unexpected presence of such a well-known character would create an excitement which would not be easy to cool. So we made a rendezvous under another tree, and I rode on alone. Thus, I was separated from both my good companions. However, before parting, I took occasion to borrow five guineas from Jem’s store.

I was as weary as a dog, although I had never been told that gentlemen riding amid such adventures were ever a-weary. At the inn in Bristol a sleepy boy took my horse, and a sleepy landlord aroused himself as he recognised me. “My poor inn is at your disposal, sir,” he cried, as he bowed. “The Earl has inquired for you to-day, or yesterday, as well as young my Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale.”

“Aye?” said I, carelessly. “Did they so? Show me to a chamber. I am much enweared. I would seek a good bed, and a sound sleep, for I have ridden

far and done much since last I had repose.”

“Yes, sir,” said the landlord, deferentially.

After a long hard sleep, I was aroused by a constant pounding on my door. At my cry, a servant entered. He was very abject. “His lordship’s valet has been waiting to give you a message from his lordship, sir.” I bid him let the valet enter. The man whose heroic nose had borne the brunt of Forister’s swift departure from the inn, when I kicked him, came into my chamber with distinguished grace and dignity, and informed me that his noble master cared to see me in his chamber when it would suit my convenience.

Of course, the old Earl was after his papers. And what was I to tell him? Was I to tell him that I was all befuddled and befuddled? Was I to tell him that after my father had kept these papers for so many years in faithful trust, I had lost them on the very brink of deliverance of them to their rightful owner? What was I to speak?

I did not wish to see the Earl of Westport, but some sudden and curious courage forced me into my clothes and out into the corridor. The Earl’s valet was waiting there. “I pray you, sir, follow me,” he said. I followed him to an expensive part of the inn, where he knocked on a door. It was opened by a bending serving-man. The room was a kind of parlour, and in it, to my surprise, were Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale. They gazed at me with a surprise equivalent to mine own.

Young Lord Strepp was the first one to thoroughly collect himself. Then he advanced upon me with outstretched hand. “Mr. O’Ruddy,” he cried. “Believe me, we are glad to see you. We thought you had gone for all time.”

Colonel Royale was only a moment behind his friend, but as he extended his hand his face flushed painfully. “Sir,” he said, somewhat formally, “not long ago I lost my temper, I fear. I know I

have to thank you for great consideration and generosity. I—I—you——”

Whereupon we both began to stammer and grimace. All the time I was choking out: “Pray—pray—don’t speak of it; a nothing—a mere nothing—in truth you kindly exaggerate—I——”

It was young Lord Strepp who brought us out of our embarrassment. “Here are two good fellows,” he cried heartily. “A glass of wine with you.”

We looked gratefully at him, and in the business of filling our glasses we lost our awkwardness. “To you,” said Lord Strepp, and as we drained our wine I knew that I had two more friends in England.

During the drinking the Earl’s valet had been hovering near my coat-tails. Afterwards he took occasion to make gentle suggestion to me. “His lordship awaits your presence in his chamber, sir, when it please you.”

The other gentlemen immediately deferred to my obligation, and I followed the valet into a large darkened room. It was some minutes before my eyes could discover that the Earl was abed. Indeed, a rasping voice from beneath the canopies called me before I knew that anybody was in the chamber but myself and the valet.

“Come hither, O’Ruddy,” called the Earl. “Thompson, get out! Is it your duty to stand there mummified? Get out!”

The servant hastily withdrew, and I walked slowly



“IF IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIP—LADY MARY.”



to the great man's bedside. Two shining, shrewd eyes looked at me from a mass of pillows, and I had a knowledge of an aged face, half smiling and yet satirical, even malignant. "And so this is the young fortune-hunter from Ireland," he said in a hoarse, sick man's voice. "The young fortune-hunter! Ha! With his worthless papers! Ha!"

"Worthless?" cried I, starting.

"Worthless," cried the Earl, vehemently. He tried to lift himself in his bed in order to make more emphasis. "Worthless! Nothing but straw—straw—straw!" Then he cackled out a laugh.

And this was my inheritance. I could have sobbed in my grief and anger, but I took firm hold on myself and resolved upon another way of dealing with the old nobleman. "My lord," said I, coldly, "my father is dead. When he was dying he gave certain papers into my hands—papers which he had guarded for many years—and bade me as his son deliver them into the hands of an old friend and comrade, and I came to this old friend and comrade of my father, and he lies back in his bed and cackles at me like a hen. 'Tis a small foot I would have set upon England if I had known more of you, you old skate!"

But still he laughed and cried: "Straw! Straw! Nothing but straw!"

"Well, sir," said I, with icy dignity, "I may be a fool of an Irishman with no title save an older one than yours, but I would be deeply sorry if there came a day when I should throw a trust back in the teeth of a dead comrade's son."

"No," said the bright-eyed old man, comforting himself amid his pillows. "Look you, O'Ruddy, you are a rascal. You come over here in an attempt to ruin me. I know it."

I was awed by this accusation. It seemed to me to be too grand, too gorgeous for my personal consumption. I knew not what to do with this

colossus. It towered above me in splendour and gilt. I had never expected to be challenged with attempting to ruin earls. My father had often ruined sea-captains, but he never in his life ruined so much as a baronet. It seemed altogether too fine for my family, but I could only blurt weakly: "Yessir." I was much like a lackey.

"Aye," said the old man, suddenly feeble from the excitement. "I see you admit it, you black Irish rogue." He sank back and plied a napkin to his mouth. It seemed to come away stained with blood. "You scoundrel, you," he bleated, as soon as he could speak. "You scoundrel."

I had a strange cowardly inclination to fling myself upon this ancient survival and squeeze his throat until it closed like a purse. And my inclination was so strong that I stood like a stone.

The valet opened the door. "If it please your lordship—Lady Mary," he announced, and stood aside to let a lady pass.

The Earl seemed to instantly forget my presence. He began at once to make himself uncomfortable in his bed. Then he cried fretfully: "Come, Mary, what caused you to be so long? Make me easy! Ruffle my pillows! Come, daughter!"

"Yes, father," answered a soothing and sweet voice. A gracious figure passed before me and bended over the bed of the Earl. I was near blinded. It was not a natural blindness. It was an artificial blindness which came from my emotion. Was she tall? I don't know. Was she short? I don't know. But I am certain that she was of exactly the right size. She was, in all ways, perfection. She was of such glory, she was so splendid, that my heart ceased to beat. I remained standing like a stone, but my sword scabbard, reminiscent of some movement, flapped gently against my leg. I thought it was a horrible sound. I sought to stay it, but it continued to tinkle, and I remember that

standing there in the room with the old Earl and my love-'til-death, I thought most of my scabbard and its inability to lay quiet at my thigh.

She smoothed his bed, and coaxed him and comforted him. Never had I seen such tenderness. It was like a vision of a classic hereafter. In a second I would have exchanged my youth for the position of this doddering old nobleman.

Suddenly the Earl wheeled his eyes and saw me.

"Ha, Mary!" he cried feebly, "I wish to point out a rogue. There he stands—The O'Ruddy! An Irishman and a fine robber. Mark him well, and keep stern watch of your jewels."

The beautiful young lady turned upon me an affrighted glance, and I stood like a stone.

"Aye," said the old wretch, "keep stern watch of your jewels. He is a very demon for skill. He could take a ring from your finger, while you were thinking he was fluttering his hands in the air."

I bowed gallantly to the young lady.

"Your rings are safe, my lady. I would ill requite the kindness shown by your father to the son of an old friend if I deprived your white fingers of a single ornament."

"Clever as ever—clever as ever!" chuckled the wicked old man.

The young lady flushed, and looked first at me and then at her father. I thought her eye, as it rested upon me, was not without some sympathetic feeling. I adored her. All the same, I wished to kill her father. It is very curious when one wishes to kill the father of the woman that one adores. But I suppose the situation was made more possible for me by the fact that it would have been extremely inexpedient to have killed the Earl in his sick bed. I even grinned at him. "If you remember my father, your lordship," said I amiably, "despite your trying hard to forget him, you will remember that he had a certain native wit which on occasion led him to be able to frustrate his enemies. It must have been a family trait, for I seem to have it. You are an evil old man. You yourself stole my papers!"

*(To be continued.)*



## A MAN OF COMMON SENSE

By HAROLD J. BLACK

*Illustrated by T. C. Dugdale*

LADY MARJORY stroked her Persian—viciously, I thought, to judge by the cat's demeanour.

"Because——" she said, and though I waited patiently for more, it was gradually borne home to me that the "woman's reason" was the whole of her answer.

"If I might venture to suggest," I said, mildly—it is useless to use any other tone when addressing Marjory—"because" is a somewhat incomplete answer to the question: "Why should you not marry?"

The Persian showed distinct signs of resentment.

"That's so like a man," she said, disdainfully. "As if the answer wasn't sufficient—eh! dear?"

Needless to say, the end of the sentence was meant for the feline—by way no doubt of mollifying her.

"You might put the question in another way," she began suddenly, after a silence which had lasted long enough to make me think that she had forgotten what we were talking about. "Why should I marry?"

I leaned forward and answered her earnestly:—

"Because, Marjory, you are the most beautiful, the most perfect——"

"Perfection has no degree," she interrupted, calmly. "Besides, you are beginning to talk nonsense. If there is one characteristic which I appreciate more than another in a man, it is common sense."

She was so pleased with this little dig at me that the Persian came in for a glorious time.

"You might choose your husband

because of his possession of that attribute," I remarked.

"It would restrict my choice, Ronald. So few men——"

"Oh, I know," I cut in, hastily. "What would you say to an advertisement?"

"An advertisement?"

"Yes—in the *Times*. Wan'ed a husband, full of common sense and——"

"It sounds gluttonous," she interrupted, thoughtfully. "But the idea is a good one. Go on."

"Full of common sense," I continued, "and——"

"Write it out," she interrupted again. The idea had so taken hold of her that the Persian had to protrude its claws to prevent a fall.

I wrote it out, and after many alterations this is what we evolved:—

"Wanted, as husband, a common-sense man. Politics and wealth no object, but must be of good birth. Apply, ——."

"How many insertions?" I inquired, never, of course, believing for a moment that the thing was anything more than a joke.

"One," she replied promptly. "If there are any common-sense men on the look-out for wives they'll see the advertisement at once."

I tore the advertisement into pieces, and was flinging them into the fire when she stopped me.

"What are you doing that for?" she asked, angrily. "Do you think I'm not in earnest?"

"I know you are not, Marjory."

"Well, you know wrong, then. If you don't put that in the *Times*, I shall."



"THAT'S SO LIKE A MAN, SHE SAID, DISDAINFULLY. 'AS IF THE ANSWER WASN'T SUFFICIENT—EH, DEAR?'"



There was no mistaking her earnestness.

"But, Marjory, what will people think?"

"What they like. It is of no moment to me. Besides, my name isn't mentioned. No one will know."

I wrote out the advertisement again, hoping that by the time I left she would have gained more "common sense."

All hope vanished, however, when I came to say good-bye.

"You'll insert that advertisement?" she asked.

"If you wish me to, certainly."

"How tiresome you are. I do hope my common-sense husband will have sufficient common sense to let him see when I mean what I say."

"I hope so, too," I returned as I shook her hand. "Good-bye! Look in to-morrow's *Times*."

"Good-bye, Ronald! Don't forget to call for the answers; but don't open any of them. Bring them all to me."

"Shall I take a cab?" I inquired, sarcastically.

"A hand-bag should be sufficient," she returned, gravely, "when you consider the characteristic desired in the applicants."

Two days later I entered her boudoir, and, with aggravated solemnity, deposited a solitary letter on her table.

To her credit be it said that she did not turn a hair.

"Only one!" she remarked as she tore open the envelope and extracted the letter.

She read it in silence.

"Well?" I asked.

"He's a"—she shivered—"a butcher."

"H'm—a butcher." I considered for a moment. "He may be very full of common sense, though, Marjory."

She nodded.

"I should say he is. Listen to this:—'My rounds of beef are celebrated throughout the country.'"

"Well, that's something, at all events," I returned, cheerfully. "In

marrying him you could view starvation as a most unlikely thing."

She gazed dreamily at me for a second or two.

"You haven't kept back any replies, Ronald?"

I pretended to look indignant.

"My dear Marjory!"

"Yes, but did you?"

"There was—another," I confessed, after a moment's silence; "but——"

"Where is it?" she inquired eagerly.

"Why didn't you give it to me at once? He may be a man of common sense, and—suitable."

"A suitable man of common sense or a man of suitable common sense—which? There is a vast difference, Marjory. Regarding that other reply, though, I didn't get it at the *Times* office."

"You didn't?"

"No—it is verbal. I met a man and said: 'How are you? Lady Marjory Quaint is advertising for a husband, and in my capacity of strong man, I'm going to lift the replies.' He said: 'My dear fellow, take mine.'"

She surveyed me calmly.

"Your newly-developed vein of humour requires to be worked before it can be said to be valuable, Ronald. Next to common sense, I respect truth in a man. I don't mean to imply that it is possible to find both in the same man."

"Of course not," I returned briskly. "A man who speaks the truth, and nothing but the truth, has no common sense; and a man who has common sense generally has enough of it to enable him to see the benefits of an occasional fib."

She gazed at me and smiled.

"This leads up to something, surely?"

"There were forty-eight replies, Marjory," I said.

"What?"

"There are at least forty-eight unmarried men who imagine that they have common sense."



"DEPOSITED A SOLITARY LETTER ON HER TABLE."

"And what did you do with them?" she asked.

"Burned them," I replied, laconically.

Her eyes flashed.

"You had no right to do that—none whatever. Why did you do it?"

I rose and took her hand.

"Because, Marjory, it increased my own chance. I selected the most unlikely reply, and——"

"I haven't yet given up the idea of those rounds of beef," she interrupted. "But go on."

"The smaller your choice, the greater my chance," I remarked. "Will you marry me, Marjory?"

"It was very dishonourable," she said.

"But, in the circumstances, sensible. I have proved that I am a man of common sense."

"By burning those replies?"

"No—by selecting the most unlikely from the bunch."

"But"—she looked puzzled—"how could you guess that that particular envelope contained an unlikely reply?"



"Easily," I returned. "I steamed them all."

"Ronald!"

"Fact, Marjory. I had made up my mind to marry you myself, and—luckily, I was possessed of some common sense."

"Not so much as you might have," she returned.

"But you have no idea——" I began, eagerly. But she checked me.

"I know what I'm talking about, Ronald. If you had had a little more

common sense than you have, you would have saved the expense of that advertisement."

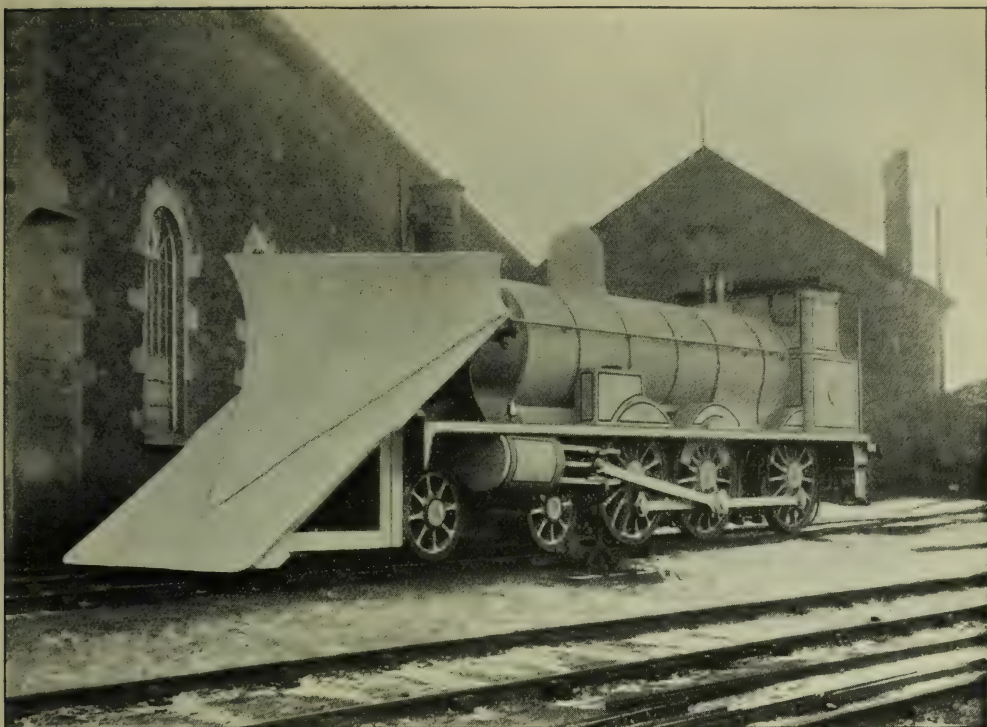
"By deceiving you even more than I have done?"

"No—by proposing to me the other day, stupid."

My own idea is that, if I had proposed to her the other day, she would, in the mood she was in at that time, have refused me. I had sufficient common sense, however, to accept her statement without argument.



"NO—BY PROPOSING TO ME THE OTHER DAY, STUPID."



SECOND TYPE OF PLOUGH. ANOTHER DESIGN.

## CONCERNING SNOW-PLOUGHS

By GEOFFREY WILLIAM RHODES

CONSIDERING the immense amount of care exercised by the various officials of our railway companies in zealously guarding not only the comfort and also the safety of the travelling public, I cannot help feeling that a statement recently published to the effect that English railway companies take no precautions against snow-falls requires to be refuted.

I feel the imputation to be all the more unfounded on account of my having in my possession several photographs of the various types of snow-ploughs adopted by the British railways, one or two of which I am using to illustrate this article.

The type of plough most generally

in use is very much like an American "Cow-catcher."

Only instead of being a little framework of timber it is constructed of steel plates bolted together. But the principle underlying each is the same, *i.e.*, to lift obstacles off the line and fling them away to the right or left.

These ploughs are of two kinds. Some are mounted on wheels and are driven along the line ahead of the locomotive, while others are constructed so as to be attached to the locomotive itself.

Mr. John Armstrong, the locomotive superintendent of the London Division of the Great Western Railway, was kind enough recently to arrange to give me a special exhibition of how this latter



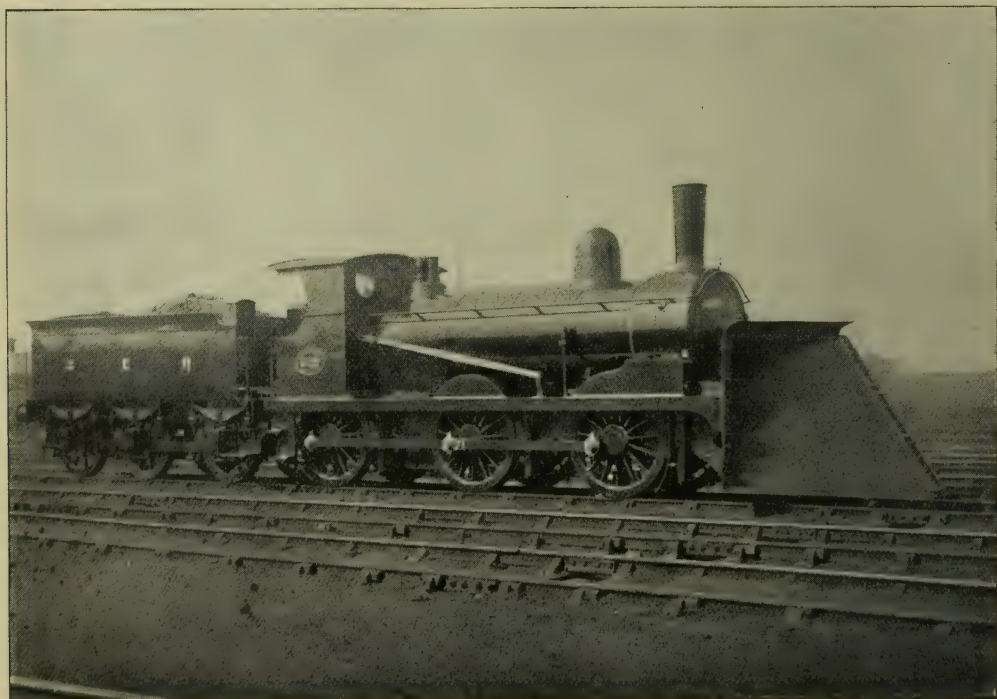
description of plough is attached, the first step being, of course, to remove the buffers in front of the locomotive. This in itself requires more "doing" than the mere mention of the fact suggests. I wonder how long an average reader of *THE IDLER* would take to achieve this task were he to be put down in front of the Cornishman at Paddington Station with a screw-wrench in his hand?

Mr. Armstrong's assistants make short work of the job, and I had not to wait many minutes before the unwieldy-looking plough was secured in its place. In fact, he demonstrated how, from the time of giving the first instructions to the locomotive with the plough attached being ready to go down the line, only twelve minutes elapsed! I wonder if it ever occurs to anyone gliding easily along in the comfortably padded compartments of a railway carriage to let

his mind dwell on the elaborate precautions that are necessary to ensure the minimum of risk and the maximum of comfort when travelling.

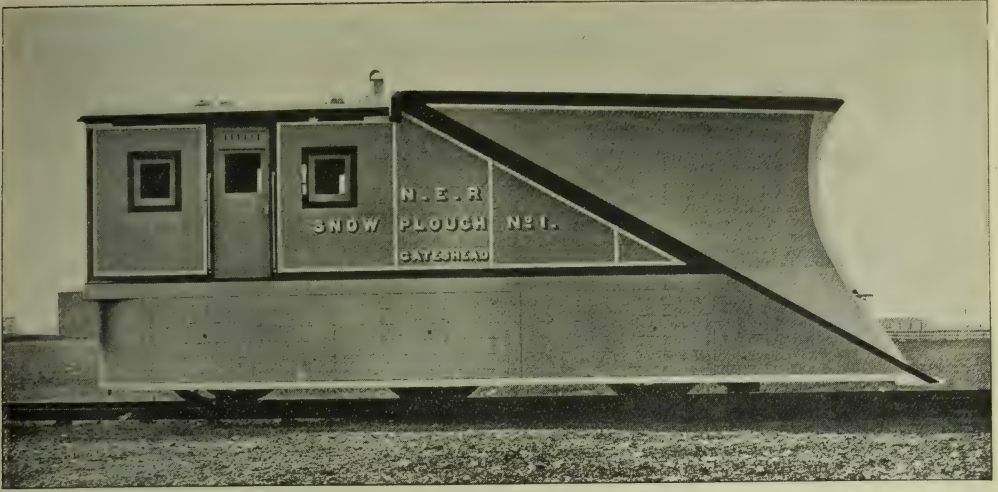
For one thing, looking at the fields and hedges and trees that flash in and out of view, they altogether ignore the staff of careful watchers whose duty it is to guard the track, the men who are responsible for the safety of the train as it slips along the metals from signal post to signal post.

During the severe winter of 1881 unprecedented snow-falls had to be coped with in the south-west of England. The climate in these counties is generally so mild that the idea of taking precautions against a heavy fall of snow would seem to be an absolute waste of time. The officials of the Great Western Railway were, however, quite equal to dealing with the emergency. Wooden ploughs were quickly constructed—



SECOND TYPE OF PLOUGH. GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY.

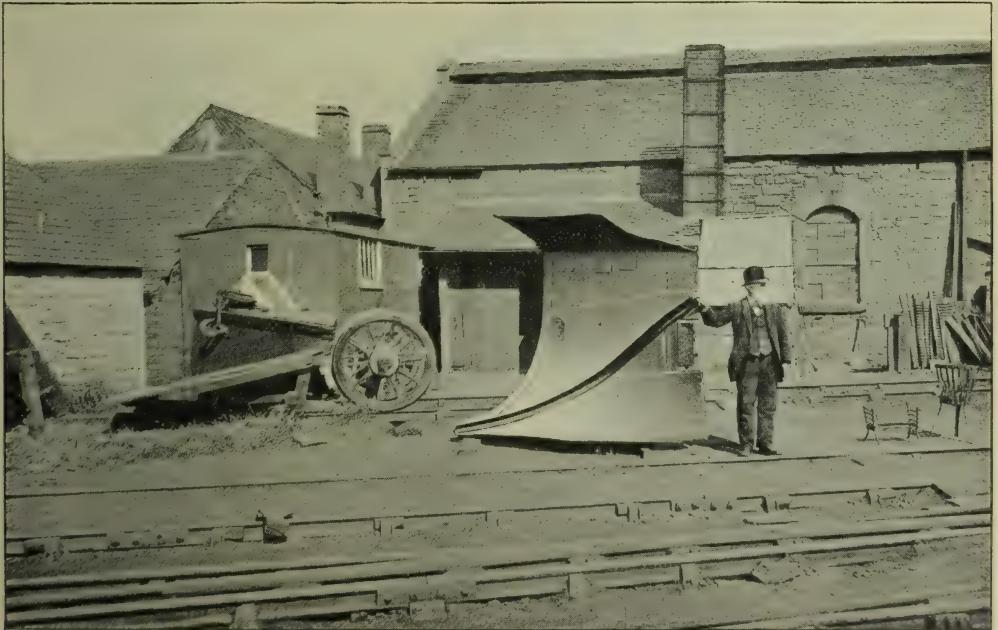
## CONCERNING SNOW-PLOUGHS



FIRST TYPE OF PLOUGH, MOUNTED ON WHEELS, AND DRIVEN AHEAD OF ENGINE. NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY.

planks of timber being bolted together for the purpose—and ordinary goods locomotives with these attached were kept working up and down the line, keeping it clear of drift.

In parts of the United States of America, especially in the mountainous districts of the Far West, the severity of the winters makes the question of keeping the track free from snow a very serious one.



SNOW PLOUGHS. A PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THEIR HEIGHT COMPARED WITH THAT OF A MAN.





SECOND TYPE OF PLOUGH. GREAT EASTERN RAILWAY.

In the plains, where the fallen snow is usually frozen into a dry powder, rotary-ploughs are found most efficacious.

The rotary snow-plough was invented by Mr. Orange Jull, of Orangeville, Canada. The rights of the original invention were purchased by Mr. J. S. Leslie, and it became known as the Leslie plough. Since then Mr. Jull has improved greatly upon the original, however. The object of both of these ploughs is to generate a high centrifugal force in the snow by the exertion of great power, and to throw the snow out in a solid stream to a considerable distance from the line.

The earlier rotary plough separated the process into two parts. The snow was cut by knives, which threw it back on to fans, by which it was distributed.

The new plough works much more

simply. An immense oblique gimlet pointed auger revolving at high speed in a square box open in front and above catches the snow after the lower plate has cut under it, and, gradually generating the required centrifugal force, hurls it out of the way.

These rotary ploughs have been in use about twenty years, and work so satisfactorily that no line equipped with one need be blocked with snow for long.

The price is £300. On a trial occasion one cleared 50,400 cubic feet of snow in seven minutes—or, in other words, 7,000 cubic feet per minute.

In the mountains, on the other hand, the danger to traffic consists in the masses of frozen water that are liable to come down the sides of the hills.

This necessitates the construction of snow-sheds, the line being entirely roofed in.

In one part of the Sierra Nevada there are, I believe I am correct in stating, over forty miles of these snow-sheds.

In the summer months, when there is of course no danger from snow, to obviate the hiding of the view attendant on running the train under a shelter, a second track outside is made use of.

After having detailed these elaborate precautions adopted by the railways to have ready for immediate use whenever the occasion demands suitable appliances for clearing the line of snow, the question that at once arises is, why does the snow want clearing away in the first place?

Obviously one of the great dangers of allowing even a light fall to remain is the fact that it hides the rails from view, and supposing that any obstacle had got on to the line the engine-driver would be unable to see it. Another serious consideration is the fact that in the case of a thaw followed by a frost there would be the risk of the ice blocking the points and throwing the signalling system out of gear.

In their books of instructions to superintendents, stationmasters, &c., the railways have laid down very exact rules in regard to the line of action to be followed either in the case of the service

of a plough being necessary, or of its being in use, or both. To explain the care necessary in this direction, I will venture to give an imaginary example.

Suppose a double main line over which expresses are constantly passing in either direction were to become temporarily snowed up at some point, say at a deep cutting for instance.

In due course we will further imagine a locomotive with a plough attached is set at work to clear the line.

The snow still continuing to fall, the driver is ordered to keep it clear.

Now one is pretty safe in assuming, in the cutting there would be no sidings. How, therefore, are the up and down expresses going to get along?

The answer is naturally not far to seek. The locomotive will dodge the expresses by passing and repassing from one line to the other.

That all sounds simple, but the point that I want borne in mind is the responsibility involved in the matter, which is the burden of the officials concerned.

In conclusion, I must not omit to acknowledge my indebtedness to several gentlemen for photographs and facts, notably among others Mr. Worsdell, the chief mechanical engineer of the North Eastern Railway, and Mr. James Holden of the Great Eastern Railway.



## THE DIVERSIONS OF A PRINCESS

By A. CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

### IV.—COSMO MALTRAVERS

"**H**E has such sweet eyes and such a charming voice!" said Anne.

"It's an actor's trade to charm!" said Wisdom.

"Whatever a man's trade, merit should always be recognised, shouldn't it?" said Anne, rather defiantly; "and Cosmo has achieved the impossible, and made me in love!"

"This is very serious," said Wisdom. "Now do sit down and listen to me for a moment. You've been living in such a whirl the last few weeks, I haven't had a chance!"

"It's no good, whatever you say!" said Anne, firmly; but turning away from the looking-glass, and settling herself in the depths of her "thinking" chair. "I know my own mind at last. I am in love!"

"Very well, dear, granted that you are in love!" said Wisdom. "Now, let's look at the future. This engagement will be much more public than any of your others, won't it? Cosmo is coming for his answer this afternoon."

"Which will be 'yes,'" said Anne, fiercely.

"Exactly," said Wisdom; "and a paragraph will promptly appear, announcing the fact in all the papers to-morrow!"

"Publicity is one of the penalties of fame," said Anne. "However you may hate it, it can't be helped!"

"It *can* be helped," said Wisdom's still small voice. "How will those paragraphs get in, if someone doesn't send them?"

"Actors have to advertise," said Anne.

"The public won't come to see them if they don't! Of course Cosmo hates it!"

"And you absolutely loathe *anyone* knowing anything about your private affairs, don't you?" said Wisdom. "So the idea of every Tom, Dick, and Harry pointing at you as the girl who's engaged to the famous Cosmo Maltravers, will make you sick with disgust! It is indeed marvellous of you to allow such publicity. Your feelings in the matter will be almost like an offering laid on Cosmo's altar."

"I only wish to serve him," said Anne, beautifully.

"Of course, the worst of making an idol of a person, is that it takes your sacrifices so much as a matter of course," said Wisdom, with a touch of regret. "Indeed, if the idol be a very popular one, it is so used to sacrifices, it doesn't even notice they're there."

"When one is in love, one makes sacrifices for the pleasure of making them," said Anne. "I don't want Cosmo to thank me!"

"That's a good thing," said Wisdom. "An actor's is not a grateful nature, as a rule!"

"Cosmo is extremely grateful to me for my sympathy," said Anne. "He says he can feel himself growing stronger and more inspired each day, and that he has never been able to act so well before!"

"Cosmo certainly appreciates anything which causes his genius to blossom," said Wisdom. "Your ardent and appreciative affection feeds his vanity delightfully."

"That's not the reason why he loves me," said Anne, with tears of indignation in her eyes. "Millions of women are in

love with Cosmo. He has letters every day from absolutely unknown girls!"

"And incense isn't exactly a healthy atmosphere to live in, is it?" said Wisdom. "Rather enervating, eh?"

"Cosmo loves me because I don't burn incense, like the others," said Anne, proudly. "He finds it a refreshing change to have to bow down before me!"

"The refreshment of change lies in its novelty," said Wisdom. "I'm afraid it would appear foolish to any man to maintain a kneeling position for ever, when there are a hundred soft-cushioned thrones waiting his pleasure. A kneeling position is rather tiring, you know."

"You mean Cosmo isn't likely to be faithful to me?" said Anne, sitting up in her chair with a sudden gasp.

"That wonderful physical charm which Cosmo undoubtedly possesses attracts every woman he meets just as it attracts you," said Wisdom. "And his profession throws him into close intimacy with all the most beautiful women of the day in society and on the stage. I don't say that he's weaker than other men, but I do say that he has infinitely more temptations."

"But if he loves me—and he *does* love me—other women would not be temptations," said Anne, desperately.

"I would not back my sole remaining penny on that fact," said Wisdom, thoughtfully. "As you have said yourself, dear Anne, a breath of outside air makes a man appreciate the atmosphere of home life so much——"

"Be quiet!" said Anne, fiercely. "I don't care what Cosmo appreciates or enjoys. I'm thinking of myself. I couldn't bear for Cosmo to look at another woman—even *look* at her!"

"Don't be silly!" said Wisdom. "If you love a handsome man, you must face the fact that women will look at him, and it's only courteous—not to say human—to look back!"

"Oh, well, I'll face it!" said Anne.

"If our happiness can't last—and perhaps it isn't very likely that it will—I think it's worth while having it. After all, I've a commonsensible nature, and when Cosmo gets tired of kneeling, he can rise up, and we will each go our separate ways."

"It's all very well to go your own separate way," said Wisdom, "but shall you enjoy watching Cosmo's perambulations quite so much? Have you realised the humiliation of the position of the wife of a fascinating actor who notoriously pursues his own—er—path?"

"I should be pursuing my own path, too," said Anne, with an unhappy look all the same.

"And where will it lead to? The same end as Cosmo's—the devil?" said Wisdom, politely.

"How dare you!" said Anne, with shining eyes and burning cheeks.

"My dear," said Wisdom, "there are three separate sorts of misery open to you if you marry Cosmo Maltravers, and you had better face them now, and see if any of them is worth while accepting. The first is the misery of humble unrequited faithfulness, the love that suffers all things, and is its own reward—or punishment!"

"Thank you, no!" said Anne, with intense decision.

"Good!" said Wisdom. "It is not a gift I'd recommend to any high-spirited young girl. The second way of misery is that which seeks oblivion in—perdition! As your nature is, on the whole, distinctly moral, your conscience would give you a very bad time. You see, you would not find any pleasure in gilded——"

"I would kill myself rather than risk the chance of that sort of misery!" said Anne, with even greater firmness. "But I couldn't anyway!"

"Continual contact with a nature like Cosmo's, who, you must admit, appreciates the physical joys of life at their full value——" began Wisdom.

"I am beginning to hate the very



sound of Cosmo's name," said Anne. "But whatever a man was, he couldn't make me so used to the idea of wickedness that I could find comforting oblivion in it. That way of misery is shut off from me with an iron gate of natural instinct."

"The third alternative is the way of commonsensible resignation," said Wisdom; "matured disillusionment! You will accept Cosmo's little peccadillos and migrations as inevitable, and your wedded life will degenerate into one of, to all intents and purposes, mutual separation. Your existence may be fairly placid, but you will have lost the joy of life, Anne."

"I am not going to marry Cosmo Maltravers," said Anne, and she rose from her chair, and began to fix the bow on her hair becomingly.

"Now don't be hasty," said Wisdom. "Think well. There's the bare chance that he may remain in love with you, and you only."

"Too risky," said Anne, "my nature's so uncertain; it needs a truly strong man to keep on liking me. You see, he would have to keep liking me in spite of *myself*, and if he had to do it

in spite of *himself* as well, I would not take odds on his success."

"And even if Cosmo did remain faithful," said Wisdom, reflectively, "he would feel he deserved a pedestal. For what is simple duty in an ordinary man becomes a shining virtue in a fascinating actor."

"I have said I am not going to accept Cosmo Maltravers," said Anne, arranging the bow of ribbon some more.

"Mr. Cosmo Maltravers is here, Miss," said the maid at Anne's door.

"I will be with him in a minute," said Anne, politely, and pouring out scent on her handkerchief.

"Don't see him," said Wisdom. "Don't go down! He'll plead his cause so well, and you are so impressionable."

"I have had quite enough advice for to-day, thanks!" said Anne, with an unwilling smile at her own satisfactory reflection in the looking-glass.

"You'll give in if you go," said Wisdom, calling after Anne on her way to the door.

"You stay behind," said Anne, and the door closed.

"Now I wonder what will happen!" said Wisdom.

## "RING OUT, WILD BELLS"

By KATHLEEN WHITTENBURY GILBERT

*Illustrated by Albert Clarke*

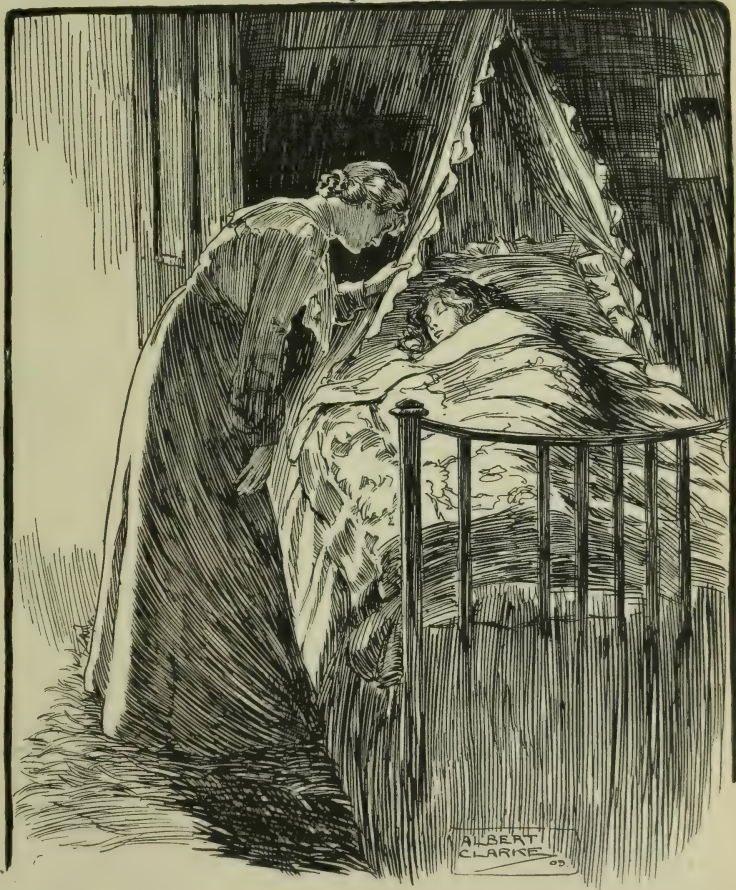
THE Manor House glowed with light from cellar to garret—warm, cheering light, that told of festivity and gaiety within. The long dining-room blazed with candles, reflected again and again in the large, old-fashioned mirrors, rivalling in their brilliancy the jewels that adorned the ladies, while the walls echoed with the chatter of many voices and the clattering of knives and forks.

Even in the servants' quarters, this New Year's Eve, there was abundance of good cheer, laughter, and merry jesting; in fact, the old house seemed to ring from end to end with mirth and gladness.

But in one room, at least, there was loneliness, and this was in the nursery of the old Manor House. Here, curled up on the mat, with her head pillowed on the cushions of an armchair, was the young governess of the self-willed daughter of the house, a child at the unmanageable age of eight years. The light burned low in the room, and the firelight flickered on the brightly-pictured walls, and, through the half-

open door, on to a little white bed in the room beyond, where, worn out with the tears and screams and struggles that generally accompanied bed-time, the governess's young charge lay at sleep.

The noise and laughter from below found its way into the room, and the girl raised her hands suddenly and put them to her ears. It was horrible for one so young, sociable, and light-hearted



"SHE MOVED RESTLESSLY ABOUT THE ROOM, WANDERED INTO THE NEXT, AND STOOD BENDING OVER THE SLEEPING CHILD."



as she to hear all this gaiety, and be able to take no share in it. She stirred restlessly in her lowly seat, as she pictured what was happening in the lighted room below.

There was, of course, old Squire Heywood beaming placidly on all his guests, but especially on his young wife—who was almost as self-willed and spoilt as her sleeping daughter—on his tall, pasty-faced son, and on his nephew, as tall, strong and broad as his son was weakly—at least, so thought the girl, who had now raised herself, and stood looking down at the photographs of these four persons, which adorned the nursery mantelpiece. First the bluff old Squire, then the pretty young wife, with her stepson and his cousin one on either side of her.

The girl moved the photographs impatiently, and, whether inadvertently or not, turned them so that only one remained looking at her. This was the broad-shouldered cousin. She moved restlessly about the room, wandered into the next, and stood bending over the sleeping child. A loud burst of merriment again shook the house, and she came slowly back to the fireside.

"Oh! what it is to be so hopelessly outside!" she said, speaking as it were to the photograph. "Why, *you*," suddenly turning the picture so that its back was towards her, "hardly know that I exist; while you"—snatching up the photograph of the son of the house—"dare to make love to me when no one is looking, and snub me the moment any one appears. Ugh!" Then, picking up those of the Squire and his wife, one in either hand, she addressed the lady with: "You, having once been a farmer's daughter, but now are a squire's wife, think of a governess as someone little better than your maid; while you, you poor old dear"—looking at the other—"are absolutely and completely under everyone's thumb."

She put them back, and began restlessly to pace the room again. She

pulled aside the curtain, and stared out into the snow-covered ground. She could see the glare of the lights below on the white snow, and quickly let the curtain fall.

"It is not that I mind-work," she began apologetically, as she paused once more before the fireplace. She appeared to address the photograph that had its back to her, "or the tempers the child gets into; in fact, that's something to struggle with—but it is the *loneliness*, and the frightful solitude of one in a crowd——" She paused and lifted her head suddenly, for something had sent a cold chill to her heart; the laughter below rose and fell, echoed only in a slighter degree from the servants' quarters. She went to the door and opened it, and ran a few steps down the passage, her head in the air. She came to the top of the back staircase, and the horrible choking fear that had broken in upon her soliloquy became reality. A hot current of air met her, bringing the unmistakable smell of burning with it, while above the burst of merriment proceeding from two opposite parts of the house, an ominous roaring met her ears.

It was evident that in the dining-room the long New Year's dinner was drawing to a close, and the servants who had waited at table had left the merry party to linger over their dessert, and had gone to join their comrades in the servants' hall, some way from the kitchen, which was by this time left deserted; so that, apart from herself and the child, the occupants of the house were concentrated in two opposing quarters of the building, with a raging fire separating them.

For one moment she leant helplessly against the balustrades, her trembling hands covering her face; then giving herself a shake, "Eva Denbeigh, don't be a fool!" she said energetically, and turned and ran rapidly down the broad middle staircase, and into the small room called the study, for no greater



"ONLY ONE PERSON SAW HIM SLIP A NOTE INTO THE HAND OF THE SQUIRE'S SON."



reason than that it possessed a desk and a telephone. Ringing the bell of the latter violently, she shouted her dreadful message of "Fire! Fire!" turned to the desk and scribbled a note on a rough piece of paper, and then rushed to a speaking tube that led into the servants' quarters, and summoned the head of the menservants.

"Come to the study at once," she called down in as steady a voice as she could command. "Don't make any remark at what I am saying, and don't say a word to the other servants. Something serious is the matter in the house; come quickly and shut the door after you when you leave the hall."

\* \* \* \* \*

When the pompous butler entered the dining-room and again handed round wine—though he had been dismissed some time since—there was a little surprise on the part of one or two of the guests, but as he went about very coolly and appeared to know his business, very little notice was taken of the circumstance, and only one person saw him slip a note into the hand of the Squire's son, which he did not attempt to open for a moment, so engaged was he with his neighbour. However, when he did unfold it, his pale face grew whiter with the kind of terror not good to see on a man's face. He took up his glass, but his hand shook so that it spilt the wine it held; but under cover of the general hilarity this was not noticed except by Ralph Leighton, his cousin, who sat opposite. He watched the youth as he apparently made a great effort to speak; he saw him consult the note, and then as if by a tremendous effort rise to his feet.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, and the hubbub ceased immediately. "Ladies and gentlemen," he repeated; "it is a lovely night." There was an astonished silence, and every eye was turned to the youth as he stood with both hands resting firmly on the table. "And an ideal night for seeing the old year out; that being the case, I am sure

my father will give his permission for us to go out immediately, for once breaking our old custom, and instead of remaining at the table to greet the New Year, welcome it under the stars." His voice was quivering, with what appeared to be nervousness, and when he finished speaking he turned appealingly to the Squire.

But the ladies had one and all begun to shiver, and the Squire's wife turned to her stepson and said as angrily as the presence of her guests permitted:—

"My dear Roy, I cannot think what has possessed you; do you wish us all to catch our death of cold?"

"Nonsense," said Roy, irritably. "Indeed—indeed, we are missing such a chance." He looked down the two long rows of men and women. "I am sure," and a sickly smile lit up his face, "if you ask any lady here, she would prefer the romance of a beautiful night, to this hot room."

There was a second's silence. Then he laughed.

"You will not understand. If you only do as I say you will see I have a reason; there is a surprise for you out there."

The guests began to look puzzled; but Roy had already left his seat and started to walk down the room. He threw open the French windows that led on to the lawn.

"Well, I shall go alone," he said with an attempt at a laugh, "and have the New Year all to myself."

One or two ladies half rose, and Ralph Leighton from where he sat could see Roy leaning helplessly against a tree, but with a curious light flickering on his face. He, too, rose abruptly, and turned to the Squire.

"It's not a bad notion," he said, in his grave voice. "I am sure, uncle, a new experiment is worth trying. I rather fancy bidding farewell to the Old Year out under the stars, myself."

"But we shall catch cold," began Mrs. Heywood.

The light was flickering redly upon Roy's face, and Ralph watching it, answered:—

"I will send the servants for wraps." He strode to his aunt's side. "Allow me," he said, offering his arm, and there was something in his face that made her rise and take it.

Each man followed his example, and offered his arm to his neighbour. And so it happened that as the long stream wended its way slowly and in perfect order out of the house by the windows, the fire was eating its way to the very door of the room they had left.

Curiously enough they did not turn and look back at the house, but wended their way chattering and laughing over the paths between the snow-covered lawns.

Here they paused in astonishment, for they came face to face with a long stream of servants headed by the pompous butler, with the dignified house-keeper on his arm.

The Squire's wife and her nephew stopped in front of them, and Mrs. Heywood was just rearing her head proudly to ask the meaning of this strange behaviour, when, turning suddenly to Ralph, "What is that?" she asked, sharply, and the words were taken up all down the ranks of the two meeting streams.

There was a sound of galloping horses, and heavy wheels, while occasional shouts rang out in the frosty air.

"Oh!"—for someone had looked back, and slowly the whole throng turned as if by magic and faced the burning building, where the smouldering fire had suddenly leapt into flames.

The rumble of the wheels grew louder and louder, and before the bewildered spectators had realised what they had escaped from, two fire engines dashed up and began their work upon the deadly flames.

An awed silence fell upon the group; the glaring light lit up the strange assortment of people gathered there,

shivering ladies in their shimmering evening dresses, mingled with the terrified servants, while the men with one accord returned to the vicinity of the house to see what help they could render.

All, that is, except Roy. Roy was receiving the congratulations of the ladies, who thronged to his side with words of praise for his wonderful presence of mind, and thankfulness for his having saved their lives.

He took it with wonderful easiness and freedom from embarrassment, contradicting nothing that they were pleased to credit him with, and the story grew as time went on, little else being spoken of but the wonderful coolness of young Roy Heywood.

A child's low crying suddenly caused many to turn towards a clump of oaks, and there on a seat under the shelter of the trees sat the young governess with her little charge, wrapped in a huge blanket, on her knee.

"My child, my child!" cried the Squire's wife, frantically. She had been staring dumbly up at the nursery windows, but now letting her lovely gown trail unheeded over the snowy grass, she flung herself down beside Eva Denbeigh, and snatched the child to her heart. And as she saw the mother's expression by the light of the flickering flames, Eva repented of the words she had spoken against her, though no one but herself had heard them.

A little knot of people gathered round them, and the Squire, more proud of his son than grieved over the ruin of his house, turned to Eva as she sat shivering on the bench, and said:—

"This is good work that has been done this night. To think that that house held seventy odd living souls, and, through the presence of mind of one person, they are all here to thank God they are alive."

Just for one moment Eva thought he was speaking of her, but, by the now fitful light, she could see he was looking





"I FOUND THIS LITTLE NOTE," HE SAID IN A LOW VOICE. "IT IS YOUR WRITING, IS IT NOT?"

at his son, who was standing in the centre of an admiring throng of women who praised him, and men who clapped him on the back.

She raised her eyes as though she did not understand, and met those of Ralph Leighton looking earnestly and rather enquiringly at her. He came to her side and stooped down.

"I found this little note," he said in a low voice. "It is your writing, is it not?"

She took it, and in a sudden leap of the dying flames read her own hasty note:—

"Please read this very quietly." The

house is on fire, but only the kitchen wing at present. I have telephoned for the engines. Make a pretext to get all the guests from the dining-room out through the French windows (to hear the bells ring the Old Year out would be a good excuse), and I will see that the servants do the same. Believe me, this is the only chance of preventing a panic. The fire is spreading rapidly."

"Yes," said Eva, slowly tearing the note in half. "I sent it to you."

"To me?"

"Yes. Whom else could I trust to do it well?"

"But Thompson gave it to Roy."

"To——" Eva paused, and her eyes strayed to where Roy still stood, the centre of an admiring group. Then she smiled. "I understand," was all she said.

"And so do I," said he, seriously.

She rose hastily.

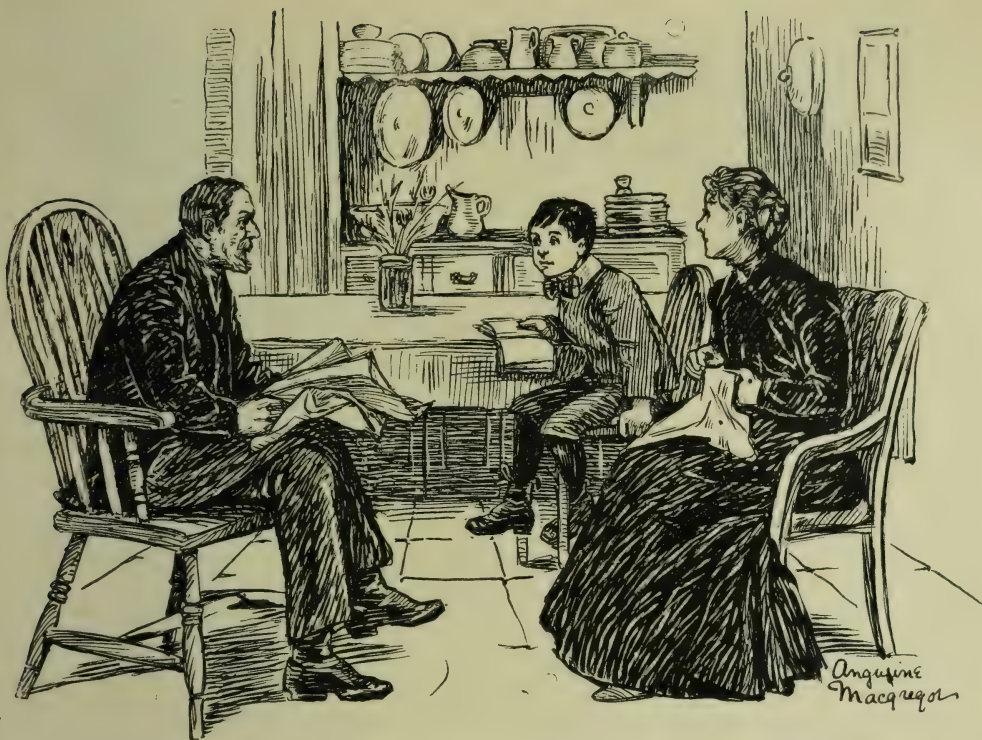
"It was nothing," she said, "Please—please do not say anything about it; they are so proud of him."

And then suddenly a clock struck the first stroke of twelve, and with a sudden

impulse the various groups closed in, and mistress and maid, master and man, forming a ring, crossed hands, and, under the light of the stars, with the dying fire casting eerie shadows upon them, with voices rather hushed by the thought of the danger they had been spared, they sang:—

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind,"

while the church bells rang out loud and clear, telling of the passing away of the Old and the birth of the New Year.



"'PAW,' EXCLAIMED MACGREGOR, 'IS GRANPAW PURDIE GAUN TO GET MAIRRIT AGAIN?'"

## WEE MACGREGOR

"FOR GRANPAW PURDIE"

By J. J. B.

*Illustrated by Angusine Macgregor*

"D'YE ken, John, that fayther an' mither'll ha'e been mairrit fifty year on the seeventh o' Mairch?" said Mrs. Robinson one January evening as, having put her little daughter to bed, she joined her husband at the kitchen fire and prepared to do some sewing.

"Is that a fac'?" exclaimed Mr. Robinson, laying aside his evening paper. "I didna think they wis that auld."

"They're no' that auld, man! Ma fayther wis jist twinty-wan, and ma mither wis nineteen when they got mairrit."

"It's you bein' the youngest that confuses me, wumman. But it's a great thing to be mairrit fifty year. Dod, is it! I suppose they'll be haudin' a dimond jubilee."

"A golden waddin', ye mean, John. I've nae doot they wull. An' I wis thinkin' it wud be nice if we cud gi'e them a bit present."

"Deed, ay!" her husband agreed heartily.

"Paw," exclaimed Macgregor, looking up from his reading and spelling book, which he was supposed to be studying diligently, "is Granpaw Purdie gaun to get mairrit again?"



"Na, na. He an' yer Granmaw's gaun to haud their golden waddin'—jist like haudin' Ne'erday, ye ken—because they've been mairrit fur fifty year."

"I wudna like to be mairrit fur fifty year, Paw. Wull there be a pairty?"

"Haud yer tongue, laddie," interposed his mother. "Attend to yer lessons."

"I ken them, Maw."

"Are ye shair? Whit about yer spellin'?"

"I ken it."

"An' the meanin's o' a' the big words? Are ye shair ye ken them a'?"

"Ay, Maw."

"Aweel, let's see the book, an' I'll hear ye twa-three meanin's. H'm! Whit's the meanin' o' the word *corporation*?"

"That's no' in the lesson."

"But it's markit."

"Ay, but that wis yesterday's. The morn's lesson's on the ither page."

"But ye sud ken the meanin' o' *corporation* if it wis in yer lesson yesterday."

"I kent it, but—but I furget."

Lizzie shook her head. "I doot—I doot ye're vera careless."

"I dinna see the use o' big words like thur," said the boy, rebelliously. "They're jist daft!"

"Haud yer tongue, an' tell me the meanin' o' the word *temperate*."

"It means angry—ragin'."

"Na, na. Whit's the meanin' o' the word *current*?"

"It's a kin' of frit, Maw," he replied, hopefully.

"If ye had lukit at yer lesson, ye wudna ha'e said that, Macgregor. Can ye tell me the meanin' o' the word *halibut*?"

"It's a thing fur playin' tunes on."

"Tit's, laddie! It's a fish."

"It's no' a fish in the Bible, fur we had it in wur Bible lesson on Monday, an' it wis a thing fur playin' on."

"Ach, ye mean *sackbut*—whatever that means," said Mrs. Robinson. "Na, na. I doot ye dinna ken yer meanin's. But

I'll gi'e ye yin mair. Whit's the meanin' o' the word *contemplate*?"

"It means to be ashamed," replied Macgregor after considerable reflection.

"It disna! But ye micht weel be ashamed o' yersel', Macgregor! Tak' yer book, an' dinna lift yer e'en frae it fur hauf-an'-oor, an' then I'll hear ye yer meanin's again, an' yer spellin', furbye."

Taking the book from his mother, Macgregor returned unwillingly to his seat, while his father, who was glad when the little examination was over, jocularly observed:—

"Never heed, ma mannie. Ye'll dae a' richt next time! There's some o' yer words wud puzzle me. Eh, Lizzie?"

"Ye needna confess yer eegnorance to the wean, onywey," muttered Lizzie, with a touch of sharpness. "That's no' the way to gar him strive wi' his lessons."

John accepted the reproof in silence, and presently changed the subject by inquiring:—

"Whit wis ye thinkin' o' daein' about the golden jubilee—I mean the waddin', Lizzie?"

"Paw, is a julibee the same as a pairty?" asked Macgregor.

"Macgregor," said his mother, "I tell't ye to learn yer meanin's."

"But I want to ken the meanin' o' *julibee*, Maw."

"Weel, I'll maybe tell ye the meanin' o' the word *julibee*—no' *julibee*—when ye can say yer lesson fur the morn." Mrs. Robinson turned once more to her husband. "I wis thinkin', John," she said, softly, "it wud be a rare nice thing to gi'e mither a wee gold brooch—that's if ye think we cud afford it. I've nae doot we cud get yin aboot—"

"Oh, I think we'll manage that, wumman. I suppose yer brither Rubbert an' his guidwife 'll be gi'ein' somethin' vera graun'."

"Vera likely. Mistress Purdie wis sayin' it wis an' occasion when somethin' gorgeous wis the correc' thing. But you an' me, John, canna keep up wi' her an' Rubbert."

"An' we're no' gaun to try it. We'll jist dae wur best, Lizzie, an' gi'e yer mither as guid a present as——"

"Paw, I want to gi'e Granpaw Purdie a present," cried Macgregor, and dropped his book with a smack on the floor.

"Is that no' nice o' the wean!" John exclaimed, gazing at his wife in admiration.

"Deed, ay," she assented, trying not to look as gratified as she felt. "But pick up yer book an' gang on wi' yer lesson, dearie, an' then we'll think aboot yer present fur yer Granpaw."

"Is the jubilee shin, Maw?" he inquired, as he secured his book.

"No' fur sax weeks. But gang on wi' yer lesson, like a guid laddie."

"But wull I be there, Maw?"

"We'll see, we'll see."

"'Deed, ye'll be there, Macgregor," cried his father. "But dae as yer Maw

bids ye the noo," he added, catching a look from Lizzie.

"But whit'll I gi'e to Granpaw fur his jubilee?"

Hismother repressed her impatience and said quietly: "Weel, dearie, yer Paw an' me'll see aboot that; an' ye better begin to save yer pennies, an' we'll add them to wur ain, an' buy somethin' fine fur yer Granpaw. Ye see? Noo try an' learn yer——"

"But I want to gi'e him a present masel'," the youngster objected.

"I doot ye'll no' ha'e enough pennies in time, Macgregor."

"Ay, I wull."

"Let him try, Lizzie," interposed John.

"Wull ye promise no' to gi'e him

mair nor his usual Setturday penny, John?" she asked quickly.

"A' richt, wumman," he stammered, reddening.

"Aweel," said his wife, with the faintest suspicion of a smile, "Macgregor can try. Ye've sax weeks, Macgregor, to save up fur yer Granpaw's present, so ye maun be carefu' wi' yer pennies an' no' be spendin' them as shin's ye get them on trash."

"I'll be awfu' carefu', Maw," said her son in the first flush of a generous impulse. "But I wunner whit I'll buy fur Granpaw. I wud like to buy a——"

"Noo that'll dae," his mother interrupted firmly. "It's near time fur yer bed, an' if ye canna say yer lesson when the time's up, ye'll ha'e to rise early the morn's mornin', fur I'm no gaun to ha'e ye sittin' at the fit o' the cless a' the year roon'."



"IT LAV IN THE TILL OF MRS. JUBY'S SWEET-SHOP."



"I wudna ha'e been fit the day, if Wullie Thomson hadna been absent. It wis his turn to be fit. If he disna be fit the morn, I'll bash him!"

"If ye say anither word, Macgregor, I'll sen' ye to yer bed this vera meenit, an' I'll mak' ye rise at sax. You an' Wullie micht think shame o' yersel's! I'm thinkin' Wullie's maybe no' the richt companion fur ye, an' if ye dinna dae better shin I'll no' alloo ye to gang wi' him. Mind that!"

"Wullie's faur nicer nor ony o' the ither laddies, an'——"

"Sh!"

The interjection warned Macgregor that further conversation on his part would not be tolerated, and after a glance at his father, who, however, appeared to be deeply immersed in the contents of the evening paper, he bent over his lesson book and endeavoured to master, for the time being at least, the spellings and meanings of two short columns of more or less long words.

His parents refrained from discussing the golden wedding further in the meantime.

\* \* \* \* \*

The weeks slipped away, and so, alas! did Macgregor's pennies. Perhaps it was more habit than absolute selfishness that proved too strong for the boy. The coin he received immediately after dinner each Saturday he at first mentally dedicated to the purchase of a gift for Grandfather Purdie, but somehow before the afternoon was over it lay in the till of Mrs. Juby's sweet-shop, while Macgregor and his chum Willie Thomson consumed the proceeds. It had, indeed, occurred to the careful Lizzie to offer herself as banker for the time being, but her husband had said, "Let him try whit he can save hissel'," and she had agreed, though not too hopefully.

So it came to pass that a couple of days before the old folks' "Julibee," as he persisted in terming it, Macgregor's total assets were a bankrupt pocket, a

worrying conscience, and a still earnest desire to show his affection for "Granpaw" with something tangible.

But love will find a way.

And on the evening before the happy anniversary he entered the home kitchen with his desire, if not his conscience, abundantly satisfied.

His parents were engaged in examining and admiring the brooch Lizzie had chosen for her mother and the pipe John had selected for his father-in-law, and both were secretly wondering if aught had come of their son's generous resolve.

"Here, Macgregor," cried John, "come awa' an' tell us whit ye think o' thur."

"Canny noo, dearie, an' dinna drap the pipe," said Lizzie, warningly.

"It's awfu' like the yin Granpaw broke at Rothesay last year," observed Macgregor. "I gi'ed him yin that whustled like a birdie, but I never heard him playin' on it. I wis aye to learn him. Maybe he hadna enough breith fur to play on it."

"It micht gar him hoast, ye ken," said Lizzie, "an' ye wudna like that." She and John were highly gratified to think that the new pipe might replace Mr. Purdie's old and frequently mourned favourite.

"An' hoo dae ye like the brooch, ma mannie?" John inquired, laying an arm about the boy's shoulders.

"It's gey wee," Macgregor replied after a brief inspection.

"Ah, but ye see it's gold—real gold," his mother informed him. "Gold's awfu' dear, ye ken."

"Ay, it's gey dear. I bocht a—a—gaird fur Granpaw," he blurted out suddenly.

"A whit?" exclaimed Lizzie.

"A watch-gaird," said her son, very red and fumbling in his breast-pocket. "It's a rale fine yin."

"Dod, but the wean's got a present fur his Granpaw!" cried John, delighted.

Macgregor at last produced a crumpled packet, and with trembling

fingers unfolded it, laying bare a glittering and fairly massive watch-chain.

"Mercy on us!" Lizzie ejaculated, as her husband took it in his hands.

"It's gold, Paw!" said the youngster in a hoarse whisper, his excitement getting the better of his conscience.

"Ay, nae doot it's gold, Macgreggor," said his father, with a discreet wink to Mrs. Robinson.

"Whit did ye pey for this, laddie?" she asked, taking it from her husband's hand.

"Thruppence."

"Deed, ye've dune weel, ma mannie!" said John, proudly. Whereupon the young conscience gave a nasty twinge.

"Ay, ye've dune rale weel, dearie," added his mother, pretending to feast her eyes on the clumsy imitation. "Ye've dune rale weel," she repeated, softly.

Macgreggor tried to speak, but could not. His readiness and jauntiness deserted him.

One of John's hands stole to the pocket where he kept his purse. "Lizzie?" he muttered, enquiringly.

She frowned for a moment; then she nodded. "I'm ower weel pleased to try to prevent ye, John," she whispered.

"Macgreggor," said his father. "Yer Maw an' me's rale pleased wi' ye fur savin' ver money to buy yer Granpaw a present. I cudna ha'e dune it masel' when I wis a laddie like you. An' here a saxpence fur ye."

The boy took the gift, but the words, "Thank ye, Paw," would not pass his lips.

And all of a sudden the sixpence fell from his fingers, and rolled across the floor, and Macgreggor dropped on his father's breast, sobbing very bitterly.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was some time ere the incoherent confession conveyed any meaning to the alarmed parents.

"But," said his mother at last, "if ye spent a' yer Setturday pennies, whaur got ye the money to buy the watch-



"IT'S GOLD, PAW."

gaird? Come awa', Macgreggor. Jist tell yer Paw an' me a' about it."

"P—Peter, Maw," mumbled the penitent.

"Wha?" asked John, gently.

"P—Patient Peter; or, The Drunkard's Son.' Oh! Oh!"

"Whit dis he mean?" the parents cried together. Then the truth dawned on Lizzie.

"Is't the nice book ye got frae yer Aunt Purdie on yer birthday?" she inquired in a shocked voice.

"Ay. But it wisna a nice book."

"But hoo did ye get the money?" asked John, signing to his wife to keep silent. "Did ye sell the book?"

"N—na. I gi'ed it til wee Joseph, an'—an' he gi'ed me his p—pistol."

"But ye've a pistol o' yer ain, Macgreggor."

"Ay. But I gi'ed wee Joseph's pistol to Wullie Thomson, an' he gi'ed me a—a—knife an' a big bew pincil; an' I gi'ed the knife to Geordie Scott fur tippence, an' the pincil to Jimsie McFaulan fur a penny, an' then I—I bocht the gaird, an'—an' it wisna a nice book, onywey." And here Macgreggor broke down.



"Lizzie," whispered John, awkwardly, "wull ye no' tak' him aside ye? Aw, Lizzie!"

"Come ower aside of me, laddie," she said after a brief hesitation. "Whit am I to say to ye?" she asked, wiping his eyes. "Ye ken it wisna the richt thing to dae—dearie. Wis it, noo?"

"N—naw. But—but I—I cudna help it, Maw."

"Weel, this is whit ye've got to dae. I'll get anither book fur wee Joseph, an' ye'll get yer ain yin back, an' ye'll gi'e me a ha'penny every Setturday till the new yin's peyed fur. Wull ye dae that?"

"Ay, Maw. But—but——"

"He's wantin' ye to say ye furgie him, Lizzie," said John. "Is that no' it, Macgregor?"

The youngster nodded and hid his face on his sleeve.

His mother took him in her arms.

When he had gone to bed comforted, she picked up the sixpence that had lain neglected on the floor, remarking to her husband, "I'm gaun to keep it, John."

"D'ye think it's a vera lucky yin, wife?" he asked, anxiously.

"I'm thinkin' it is," said Lizzie, who as a rule, was not given to sentiment.



Angeline  
Macgregor

"THE YOUNGSTER NODDED, AND HID HIS FACE ON HIS SLEEVE."

# JOSH, THE RE-BORN

By JOSEPH KEATING

*Photographs by S. Timothy*

**M**R. BOWDEN leaned back against the hedge of white-blossom briar, closed his eyes to escape the glorious light of the setting sun, and slowly took a large mouthful of whiskers.

"If on'y we could ha' got Josh to dip," he murmured reflectively: "if on'y we could ha' got him to dip he would ha' been one of us certin."

Mr. Mears, being deep in his hencoop, made no reply.

"Certin," repeated Mr. Bowden, taking a larger mouthful of his beard.

"Certin," now also said Mr. Mears—who was a small man, with big furrows on his brow—kneeling and grunting at his work of making the hencoop in his garden. "Certin," he grunted again. "It would ha' been a blessing—dum the thing!"

Mr. Bowden's whiskers fell out of his mouth. The mixed language had an element of surprise in it.

The roll of wire netting had made a wild spring out of Mr. Mears' hands and struck the little man in the face.

Mr. Bowden closed his eyes, and rolled up his beard again into his teeth, through which he said slowly:—

"Josh, too, is a dreadful chap for wicked language."

"Wicked language!" cried Mr. Mears. "A'most any chap would do it if he had a scratch like that. I don't know as I did use wicked language neither," he said, fiercely hammering at a nail to fasten the dangerous netting to the hencoop. "An' a unmerited rebuke is aggravating. An' I don't know neither, Charlie," he went on, evidently much hurt by the innuendo, "as I ought to be put on a level with Hopping Josh, who——"

"He that exalteth——"

"Now, look yeer, Charlie. Thee

knows, the same as me, that you don't want to exalt much with Hopping Josh. Of all the downright, unright'chus men that was—that's Josh. He's better now, I'llow, and we'll let bygones be bygones. But you remember what he was when he got about agin after the accident to his leg in the pit, and heered the chaps call him 'Hopping Josh'?"

"It was Josh's short leg that shortened his temper, I reckon."

"P'raps so. But whenever he heered um call it, if ever the evil bein' was in a man's heart and soul—that was Josh. Why, I've seed his black eye gleamin'—an' he've got a heye, Charlie!"

"Like a heagle's," admitted Charlie.

"I've seen his eyes burnin' an' his red whiskers standin' out like flames of fire. And his language—well, there, Charlie."

"It was his short leg," Mr. Bowden said with conviction.

"Ah!"

"He don't mean no harm."

"Maybe. I know a body can't feel no an'mos'ty agin the chap. He listened to you, Charlie, 'cause of his boy. All the world he cussed at 'cause of his short leg. But he feels tender about that young Tommy now his old woman's gone."

"I told him I was glad to see he was comin' to think more o' the Lord. His temper burned up at once. 'I'm a-thinkin' of the boy,' says he."

Mr. Mears stretched the wire over the wooden frame. It did not fit. He drew it back with care, fearing another scratching.

"Aye," Mr. Bowden went on, with closed eyes. "Josh got afeered that the cussin' and lost way he lived in would be dangerous for the boy. 'Twas that I got afeered of, too. I said:—



'You're a godless man, Josh. I want you for the boy's sake to be a member of Siloah.' 'You want my money for the chapel,' said he. 'No,' says I, 'I want your soul for the Lord.'

"An' you nearly finished the good work, too." Mr. Mears spoke with difficulty, as he was doubled over the hencoop, still deep in its measurements.

"Nearly finished indeed it was. It's a miracle that he isn't a true Baptist at this minute."

"If only for the water——" grunted Mr. Mears, with all his blood in his head owing to his awkward position.

"If only for the water. Yes; if only for the water he'd ha' been one of us for ever, certin."

Mr. Bowden's thoughts had travelled their circle.

"Certin," he repeated.

Then he put all his beard into his mouth.

"Certin," roared his friend, now with his head inside the hencoop. His voice came out like muffled thunder. "Right to the banks of the river we brought him."

"But," sadly said Mr. Bowden, "he was like the hoss that one man could lead to the water——"

"Aye," came from the voice inside the hencoop, with a reverberating groan in the tone like thunder in pain. "But all Siloah couldn't make that sinner drink of the Lord."

"We got him to the brink that blessed day."

Mr. Mears drew his head out of the hencoop and eyed it all around.

"An' a beautiful day it was," said he. "With all the women an' children in their nice clothes all along the banks of the river, come up to see Josh baptised. An' what with all the singin' an' all the baptising it was a happy day for Siloah."

"A glorious day!" Mr. Bowden's enthusiasm suddenly rose. "All were borne into the middle of the river——"

"All—except Josh."

"All—with one exception"—Mr.

Bowden's enthusiasm still held up—"were borne into the middle of the river and made full Christians and born again by the blessing of immersion. A glorious day!"

"It was a bit chillish, though."

"It was a bit chillish. Yet not so much to be noticed by the others. They were in the true state."

"But Josh!"

"Oh, Josh! When it came to his turn: 'What!' says he, 'be dipped down in that cold river? Must I do that to go to heaven. No; I go to hell first!'"

"An' then he hops clean away."

"The devil took hold of him."

"But the wind *was* a bit chillish."

"It *was* a bit chillish"

"But you can't feel no an'mos'ty agin him. Josh meant no harm."

"Not he."

"It was the Lord's will."

"Maybe."

They forgave him. The poor deacons were rich in the charity which wealthier dignitaries so often lack.

"P'raps the Lord will find a way to open his eyes——"

"To save his boy from bein' brought up soulless?"

"Aye."

"Maybe."

The subject had become painful. Silence fell upon it like a stone.

Mr. Bowden looked away across the valley reflectively biting his beard.

Mr. Mears went on earnestly with his work. He stuck his head and half his body into the hencoop. Then he drew himself out, and having satisfied himself upon some abstruse calculation, he carefully stretched the wire across the front of the hencoop and held it in place with his left hand while his right grooved behind him for hammer and nail. The hammer and nail not being within reach the groping went on without result, his hand waving from side to side like the trunk of a circus elephant when the boys have not even orange peel to put in it. Mr. Mears began to mutter.



THE COLLIERY.

"Cassn't see them hammer and nails, Charlie?" he cried.

Mr. Bowden was paying no attention. His gaze was fixed on the colliery framework—a black scaffold against a red sunset—which could be seen from the hill-side where he stood.

"Think there's sommat wrong, Jimmy," murmured he, keeping his eye on the pit.

"Think there is!" snapped Mr. Mears. "If I let go this yeer wire netting the nasty thing will go all wrong agin, and scratch me worse'n ever. Cassn't thee see that theer hammer and nails?"

His right hand waved savagely to and fro behind his back, like the tail of a wild cat.

Mr. Bowden now looked down.

"Oh, aye! Here thee bist!"

He picked up the hammer and nails

and put them within reach. The groping hand at last settled upon them, and the furrows on Mr. Mears' brow unrolled themselves.

The thud and rattle of an iron hammer against loose iron plates floated over the hillside to them from the colliery.

"One, tew, three, fower, five," said Mr. Bowden. "Yes, there's sommat the matter. Pit's broke!"

"And most likely somebody broke too," added Mr. Mears, looking up.

"We'll go 'cross."

They went down the hill eager to know what had happened. They met a collier, black-faced and tired, hurrying away from the pit-head.

"What's up?" they asked.

"I've just come up by the up-cast. Carriage gone down the sump, I b'lieve; an' some men in it."



"No!" They looked horrified. "Who are they?"

"Hoppin' Josh is one."

The deacons stared at each other; then, without a word, ran to the top of the pit.

While the deacons were on the hillside, Josh and his boy were under their feet—just a few hundred yards deeper down, in the pit of darkness. And while the amiable Charlie and Jimmy were looking after his eternal welfare, Josh attended strictly to temporal matters, shifting muck into the gob, by which the learned will understand that Josh and his buttys were shovelling minute carboniferous particles—briefly, coal dust—into the space behind them, from which they had dug out the black treasure that Nature had hidden away so carefully in the heart of the earth. They had stolen the black gems in tons, and the hole had to be filled. Their idea was identical with the original one of Nature—to keep up the earth.

So while Charlie and Jimmy talked, Josh worked. The deacons amused themselves gardening, delighted with the golden glow of sunset, beautiful white clouds, and the fresh breeze of the hill sides. Down below, Josh and his buttys had clouds, too, only they were neither white nor beautiful, but black and dusty. Also the breeze on which the clouds languidly lolled was warm, but not at all fresh like the hillside wind. Instead of making a man open wide his jaws (however capacious his particular maw) to inhale deep breaths and bless its fragrance, Josh's breeze and clouds made him shut tight his white teeth and splutter wicked unprintables. Over the hills, twilight fell gently from the blue dome with its pink tints from the sunset glow. The fading light of day grew more beautiful as it grew less. Josh's light was fading, too; but not in a golden glow. Scarcity of oil in the lamps was his sunset. The two lights, hanging from a low post near the coal, were two blurred red rings, dim in the

dust, and burned discontentedly like moons in a fog, sulky at working so much overtime.

"Gather up tools!" cried Josh at last, sharply. "Place clear for-morrow. Let's git out! Tamp, Tommy!"

Tommy tamped. He snatched at his lamp, and hitched it to his belt. In one minute and fifteen seconds he had scoured the face—upper side, lower side, and road—and put the tools in a neat heap out of the way of falls during the night.

Then father and son made haste to get out, Tommy and his red light having to keep up a jerky trot at intervals behind the energetic hop of his father, all along the two miles of rough road to the bottom of the pit. There the notorious individuality of Josh came out as usual. A little group of men just come from the warm face stood shivering in the cold wind at the pit-bottom waiting to go up. A big electric light, with dusty globe, hung in the centre of the rough archway, and injured the eyes of anyone daring to look at it. The wind rushed noisily down the shaft and blew nubs of coal into the shivering men's black faces.

"How be, Josh?" said they, in greeting.

"How be?" returned Josh, his eyes flashing around for something.

"Keep youer turnn, Josh," hinted the men.

Josh growled, and his eyes flashed around again. With his up and down motion of walking slowly he moved nearer the shaft.

"Keep turren," some said again.

Josh drew Tommy to his side, and leaning down on his short leg meditated.

Waiting for the carriage to go up was most unpleasant, and each man jealously watched his place; for Josh and his boy made the number more than the regulation figure. As they were the last comers, they should be last to go up. And the others kept a keen eye on the movements of this



THE "TIPPERS," WHO TAKE THE COAL OUT OF THE TOP OF THE PIT.

noted personage. They stood in a queue like pit patrons of a popular play.

The carriage came down suddenly. Also Josh with a sudden hop, covered the distance between him and the centre guide.

"Look alive, Tommy!" cried he.

He squeezed into the bunch of men dragging his boy with him, and most triumphantly secured a place in the carriage with a flagrant disregard of the rights of his fellow men.

"Well, see that now!" roared the two who were left forlorn outside. "We are done out of our rights!" they cried.

Josh declined to enter into controversy. He swore and called them fools, and made good his footing, as the hitcher sent up his signal to the engine-man to pull up.

The chains above the carriage tightened; it was lifted up gently; and the hitcher pulled back the fans.

Then something went wrong with the engine. Instead of going lightly up, the carriage went heavily down. The fans which should have been in position to support it, were not prepared for this unusual course, and the carriage dropped with a plunge into the sump.

Nothing in Nature goes singly, and misfortunes, being natural, go in pairs. The plank floor below the fans broke under the shock of the carriage, and the sump being the acknowledged receptacle for all water around the pit-bottom, the carriage sank slowly into a very deep and dirty pool, and the occupants howled.

If Josh had not done what was wrong he would have escaped this. But he



did not see the moral just then. His voice rose and wild oaths rose with it.

His companions being less hardy prayed.

The carriage sank, sank slowly; and the men feared they should be drowned. But just as the water rose to their chins the carriage found support and stuck. Then murmurs of thankfulness came from them.

All were in darkness. Their lights were drowned.

By clinging to the handle bars at the sides they could hold their heads out of the water.

But the boy was not tall enough for this.

Josh, as soon as the water burst in, forgot himself in his love for the boy, let go his hold of the bar, snatched up his son and perched him on his shoulder.

But he had to stand on one leg. The other was too short.

When the carriage sank deeper, his one leg became too weak, and he had to sink down quite over his head to rest himself. When he rose again he swore earnestly.

But Tommy was crying after his ducking. His tears were as copious as the drippings from his clothes.

"Give me the boy," said a tall collier, quickly transferring Tommy to his own shoulder. There, the boy with his head doubled down, because the roof of the carriage was low, sat in safety, and he laughed instead of cried.

"Thank-ye," spluttered Josh.

The gleam of his eyes in the darkness was great, but it softened at that moment in gratitude to the tall man; for the boy was the only thing in the world that Josh loved.

Now that his son was safe, Josh's heart was free, and his feelings found their natural expression. But that natural expression it is not possible nor permissible to give here. Fire and brimstone were the elements chiefly in evidence when Josh expressed himself.

"Dreadful!" muttered a religious collier.

"Hold on, Josh! The water's boiling with it."

"We aint drowned; but, dratto, we'll be scalded to death!"

The men were trying dolorously to be cheerful.

"Dratto!" one added laughing. "I think Josh is the Jonah of this trip, whatever."

"Throw him overboard!" suggested one, taking his Bible for precedent.

The others laughed.

"There aint any overboard; or we'd all be overr."

"I can see just a speck of the electric light. But there's no room for anything else to get in or out of this hole!"

"We mus' wait a bit agen, I s'pose."

Josh's big beard dripped, dripped, after his ducking; his eyes were smarting; he was still standing on one leg; and his tongue still rolled out his raging indignation.

The water bubbled when anyone moved, and sometimes a disgusted splutter came from one who unthinkingly dropped his lower jaw in a yawn. This squirted the water over everybody else, and there was a chorus of protests.

"Uch!" said one: "the water is soaking into my bones."

"We shall have fine rheumatics after this, you shall see," prophesied another.

They all knew that every man at work above and below was excitedly doing all things possible to get the carriage out. It did not move, however, and Josh was left standing on one leg.

If he had not in the first place been hampered by Tommy, he would have got hold of one of the handles; but now these were out of reach. Each man would have fought to the death for his grip at the handle bar. So Josh had to stop in the middle of the carriage, standing tip-toe on his one leg to keep above the water line. Then he grew too tired. He knew he would have to sink again to rest a second or so on the other leg. As his good leg grew

weaker his oaths grew stronger, and a great one was cut off in the middle by a bubble as, in spite of himself, his head sank once more under water. When he rose again, the noise of the dripping from his red beard into the pool was like a mountain torrent, and his opinion on the whole situation like a tempest from Hades. It was supernatural. The awful words, the dazzling ideas, the weird wishes and lurid embellishments, the freshness and felicity of phrasing, were his own. They defy imitation.

I knew one man in the pit who used to kneel down on the coal when swearing. When things went wrong, he used to go round the workings and collect a group of colliers; then go on his knees in their midst and make them tremble. If he found inspiration in this way, Josh was handicapped as he could not kneel owing to the water. But he could do without it. I cannot show how, for the sublime in wickedness is as much beyond me as the sublime in virtue. But I willingly give the substance of his remarks, which, even undecorated, had great vigour:—He hoped that the man who first invented rotten pit-ropes which let carriages drop into the sump would be condemned to swallow one steel-wire rope a thousand miles long and a foot thick for breakfast, dinner, supper, and



THE "HITCHERS," WHOSE WORK IS TO PUT THE COAL IN THE CARRIAGE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIT.

any other meal he took, so that he should be endlessly busy cramming tarred wire down his throat; and, further, that he should be compelled to crawl like a spider up and down the ropes of deep pits for ever without rest or pity. He went on to hope that the man who invented pit engines which didn't work when required should be tied to the rim of the fly-wheel of the biggest winding engine ever seen, and whirled round at a speed varying from five hundred thousand to five hundred million revolutions per minute. Also he spoke of a spiritual grievance. He asked if this was the kind of treatment he deserved? He had been admonished by two men who called themselves religious. They had told him to better his ways and seek salvation. He had listened to them. He had been think-



ing about it. He had gone as far as he could. And this was how he was treated! This was the reward he got for his good intentions! Was this any encouragement to be religious? No, he thought not. If the Lord didn't look after people better than this, he thought he'd rather go on as before.

At this point his leg suddenly gave way under him; and down he was forced to sink. Six times did he grow tired of standing on one leg; six times his head slowly sank into the water; and six times he rose again and made the welkin ring with his outrageous language as he stood on tip-toe and shook the water out of his big red beard. But each outburst had a prelude. His first thoughts as he rose out of the water were for the well-being of his son.

"You still safe, Tommy?" he gasped.

"He's all right, Josh," the man who held him answered.

Then Josh spoke for himself.

But when he rose the last time, a drag seemed to be on his tongue. Weariness of body and spirit hampered his phrasing. His strength seemed to have been tested to straining point.

"Lads," said Josh, "I'm a-gettin' weak."

"Cling on a bit longer, Josh; they won't be long now pullin' us up," one of the men replied hopefully.

Josh muttered; then asked aloud:—

"You all right, Tommy?"

"Ay, ay, Daddy."

Then Josh became silent. His strength must have gone from him entirely; for he felt that if he went under once more he would never be able to rise again. And he thought with pity of his orphan boy, for whose sake, he remembered, poor old Charlie and Jimmy, the deacons of Siloah, had advised him to reform. Then a curious change came into his mind—a vague wonder if there was any connection between his present danger and his previous conduct. He remembered how harshly he had broken away from what Charlie called his salvation

that Sunday on the bank of the river. Yes; it was cruel. He could see now that for the boy's sake he ought to have gone on and been saved. It would have done no end of good for the boy in the eyes of the Lord. The boy was the underlying thought in all Josh's calculations. And as Charlie had said, Josh was not evil in heart and no one could bear him real animosity. The simple deacon was quite sure he would be able to bring Josh into the Household of the Lord through the boy. Indeed, any man who loves a child has the spark of God-worship in his heart.

Josh's thoughts began to form a direct connection between the river and the sump, and he saw a supernatural design in the situation. He had, he knew, flouted the idea of being dipped in the river, and brought disgrace upon the name of the Lord. But now he thought of the awful warning given to him by Charlie Bowden with the Bible in his hands: "Unless a man be born again of water, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Only by baptism could a man be saved! And, thought Josh, the deacons had been in communication with God to bring about his salvation, willy nilly, for the sake of the boy. He had rejected immersion in the river. Well—he *was baptised in the sump*.

At the thought, Josh felt strangely elated. He was baptised and saved now, at any rate; and Tommy would be well cared for by the Lord.

Weakness crept over him, and he found himself slowly sinking. The water seemed colder, and it lapped around his throat with an icy touch. Yet he felt happy. Lower sank his beard, and he felt all his strength giving way. It would be no use resting on the other leg any more. He could not rise again.

"Lads," he murmured, "I'm a goin'. Take care o' the boy. Give him to Charlie and Jimmy."

"Hold up—keep up, Josh!" they cried.



THE PIT HEAD.

But down, slowly down he sank.

Yet instead of finding the water creep over his head he was drawn gently above it.

"Thank God!" exclaimed his companions.

They felt the carriage slowly gliding up out of the sump.

"There you are!" Josh said, faintly; "I *had* to be saved. *God was dipping me till I gave in!*"

The breakdown had been made good. The iron cage rose out of the water with a gulp-like sound. Up past the electric light at the normal pit-bottom it went.

"All safe?" eagerly asked the men waiting there.

"Ay, ay! Send her up top, quick!" cried the men. Their water-soaked clothes dripped like a shower-bath.

One was holding up Josh.

The hitcher gave the signal.

In a few minutes the carriage rose into the red light of sunset. The

anxious men at the top gathered round the occupants, and the first to support Josh were his good friends the deacons.

"Lads," said Josh, weakly, "I'm yourn—I'm yourn, for ever. You've caught me fair; and I'll never run away from ye—never. That's Josh's word."

The deacons exchanged a look of joy. They knew Josh's heart was in his words. They were delighted with their captive.

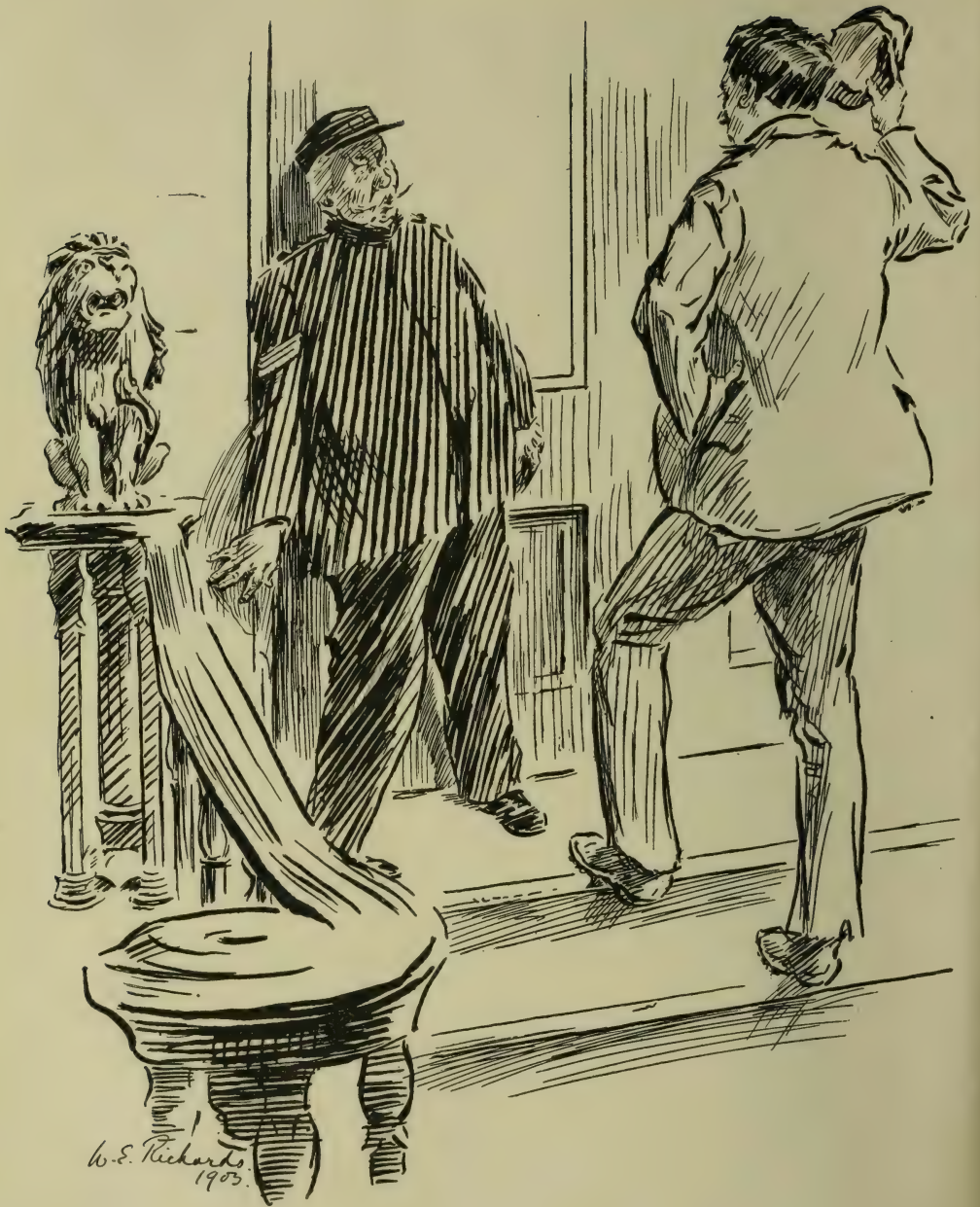
"Jimmy," said Charlie, "we be mighty hunters afore the Lord."

"Charlie," whispered back Jimmy, who had heard details of the situation, "I reckon it was Josh's short leg that made him take this long step on the high road to grace."

Each closed one eye and gave a satisfied nod. And they went home, singing:—

"For the Li-on of Judah  
Shall break every chai-ain,  
And gi-ive us the vict'ry  
Again and again."





"GOOD LUD! SIR. YOU AIN'T GOING INSIDE IN THOSE CLOTHES?"

## THE LIFE MEMBER

By CHARLES GLEIG

LIKE most members of the Orlando Club, Digby Wilmot had never in his life done a day's work, nor earned a shilling. Being a modest young man of lethargic temperament, he was well content with an allowance of twelve hundred pounds a year, and the prospect of inheriting the considerable fortune of an eccentric aunt. Lady Godiva Wilmot had never urged him to seek distinction, and Digby himself had always disliked labour. Politics bored him, the field of military glory was strewn with educational pitfalls, and the close atmosphere of the Law Courts had stifled a boyish fancy for a legal career. Church and stage, he had sometimes reflected, gave a man insight into the heart of woman, but he felt that such knowledge would be dearly bought by a course of provincial touring or by the composition of sermons. Thus, he had weighed and rejected all the recognised careers, and, as the years slipped past, the gates of fame closed automatically. At twenty, Digby Wilmot wavered between the Woolsack and the See of Canterbury. At thirty, the problem had solved itself, and he was freed from all sense of responsibility in the matter. Wars raged; governments rose and fell; reputations were made or marred; the working classes worked or went on strike; men of science invented curious methods of communicating with their fellow men, or of destroying them with high explosives. The world, in short, wagged on, and Digby Wilmot sat apart from its strife and struggles in the calm seclusion of the Orlando Club.

Some men, bored by idleness, seek distraction in drink, marriage, vice, or sport. Digby did not need these cowardly makeshifts. He elevated

idleness to a fine art, existing as contentedly as a lily of the field. The best houses in London were open to him; he had scores of friends, and a variety of blameless interests that filled his life between ten o'clock breakfast and midnight. "There is no place like bed," was one of his simple maxims. It was his invariable rule to spend nine hours and a half between the sheets. Another saying of Digby's was: "A good luncheon breaks the back of the day, and dinner its neck." He played a fair game of billiards, held his own at "snooker pool," enjoyed his morning ride, his afternoon nap, and took a mild interest in current literature and the drama. Within the limits of his small allowance the young man was charitable, open-handed. Once, when a member of the Orlando fell into difficulties, Digby lent him twenty pounds, though fully aware that he should see his face no more. He gave sixpences to blind beggars, overpaid cabmen, and flung pence to organ-grinders of doubtful nationality. With these expensive tastes he could not save money—nor had he any desire to do so. On the other hand, he incurred no debts. He amazed his tradesmen by his system of cash payment. One or two fashionable tailors had hesitated to countenance the innovation.

Digby Wilmot, it will be seen, was a happy man, and, in his way, a philosopher. Love and ambition, he held, were the chief causes of human misery; yet neither had ever cost him a night's rest. When man grows conscious of happiness he excites the jealousy of the gods.

One afternoon in summer, when Wilmot awoke from his usual siesta, he



overheard the conversation of two members of the club.

"A deuced bad business for our young friend," Lord Fitzdoodle was saying. "They tell me she has lost the whole boilin'."

"Poor devil!" said the other languidly.

"Yes, the whole boilin'," repeated the first speaker. "There ought to be a law, don't you know, to stop maiden aunts from speculating. Seems a reversal of nature."

"So it does," agreed the other. "What'll he do, I wonder?"

Lord Fitzdoodle yawned.

"Enlist, or shoot himself," he hazarded, dispassionately.

"Comes to much the same thing," said the other. "Hope he won't be borrowing money from his friends. Friendship can't stand that sort of strain. Beastly rough on the chap, I must say. Let's have a drink!"

"We might give him a farewell dinner," suggested Lord Fitzdoodle. "I'll mention it to the committee."

Wilmot rose and stretched himself.

"Who's gone under now?" he asked. "Excuse me for chipping in. I couldn't help overhearing your talk."

The two men appeared embarrassed. They eyed him covertly, and then looked at one another.

"Haven't you heard?" asked Fitzdoodle.

Wilmot shook his head, but a suspicion that they had been discussing his own case flashed into his mind.

"You mentioned something about a maiden aunt," he said with forced composure.

They were silent, and Wilmot's fear was confirmed.

He received the bad news with the fortitude that seldom deserts a man of good breeding. Lady Godiva, it seemed, was completely ruined.

"Very hard cheese for you, old man," concluded Fitzdoodle. "Have a large whisky and soda?"

Wilmot thanked him, but declined. He was touched, however, by the bald but sincere expressions of sympathy offered to him by these and many other members of the club. In the course of the evening he had to decline fully fifty offers of refreshment, but accepted enough to convince him that the world, and especially the Orlando Club, was packed with friends.

\* \* \* \* \*

A year passed. During this period Digby Wilmot lived frugally upon his furniture, and, towards the end, upon his clothes. He had failed to obtain employment. At first he had felt confident of securing an appointment, preferably as private secretary to somebody, but the hope declined as his clothes grew shabby, his linen frayed, his boots shapeless and patched. Then he had knocked in vain at the doors of Commerce, tried his 'prentice hand at journalism, abased himself before theatrical agents, and replied to miscellaneous advertisements. As a life member of the Orlando he was still able to use the club. He answered advertisements upon the club note-paper, and, occasionally, received a reply. By degrees, as his clothes grew shabbier, his manner increasingly depressed, the members ceased to maintain their sympathy with his misfortunes. On his side, Wilmot was unable to assume interest in the frivolous talk of his old acquaintances. He scented patronage in the languid greetings of men who were merely over-fed or bored. After spending his day tramping the muddy streets in search of employment, he would return, weary and dispirited, to the club to scan the advertisements in the evening papers. At such times the empty laughter of these luxurious idlers maddened him. If a bottle of champagne were opened, he thought of the coarse eating-house in which he dined at midday. Even if a member was delicately served with tea and toast, Wilmot was reminded of the fare at

Lockhart's. Thus he drew apart from his old friends, and soon, as he sat brooding in the reading-room, they ceased to speak to him.

For a week or two he was not seen in the club; the members noted his absence with relief. Wilmot had never asked any of his old friends for a loan, but his increasing poverty made them feel uncomfortable. Then he reap-

"That is my intention," replied Wilmot. "These are my working clothes, Baze. I am proud to say that I have found honest employment. I work for Messrs. Creeber, the eminent millers, at a salary of twenty-five shillings per week. The flour sticks, as you may notice; but what of that? Honest work, my good Baze, honest work!"

The hall-porter, gaped at him and



"THE WAITERS . . . SCARCELY TURNED A HAIR."

peared, and the real embarrassment began.

The hall-porter was taking the air upon the steps one fine evening, when he became aware of the intrusion of a British workman.

"Stop, my man!" exclaimed the hall-porter. "This is not a public-house!"

"I am quite aware of that, Baze," was the reply, and the man, removing his old cap, stood revealed as Digby Wilmot. Baze recognised him instantly by his voice.

"Good Lud! sir. You ain't going inside in those clothes?" urged Baze.

offered no further remonstrance. Wilmot pushed open the swing doors and passed into the marble halls of the club.

In the luxurious dining-room, illuminated by rose-coloured lights, Wilmot's hob-nailed boots sank noiselessly but deeply into the new Persian carpet. Dainty little tables, each with its snowy cloth and glittering appointments, stood in snug recesses of the room. The waiters, wearing the tasteful uniform of the club (sky-blue coats with gilt buttons, amber waistcoats, and knee-breeches), hovered respectfully about the tables, their thoughts (if they had



any) marked by an obsequious vacancy of expression. They scarcely turned a hair as the flour-bedaubed figure of Digby Wilmot brushed past them. Lord Fitzdoodle and a dozen other members were scattered in small parties about the room. Wilmot nodded carelessly to the men known to him as he walked about in quest of a vacant table. Having found one, he sat down, and called loudly for bread and cheese and a pint of ale. After some delay, and a consultation between the waiter and the steward, the unusual fare was conceded.

"No, I can't afford butter, except on pay days," Wilmot audibly informed his waiter. "Bring me the Worcester sauce."

He helped himself to about half a pound of Stilton, and began to eat with relish. As he ate, he conversed affably with the embarrassed waiter, ignoring the sour looks of his former friends. He seemed to experience a distorted pleasure in thus defying social etiquette; but he violated no written rule of the club. It had never occurred to the committee to form a rule prohibiting free speech.

One by one the other members fell into silence. They felt no interest in Wilmot's monologue, yet, like the wedding guest, "they could not choose but hear." He discussed the recent depression in flour, alluded to the charms of early rising, praised the cheese, and dwelt cheerfully upon his expectation of a small rise in wages. One by one the tables were deserted. Wilmot was left in possession of the dining-room.

The bread and cheese supper cost rather more than he could afford, but he did not grudge the outlay. As a life member of the club, he was resolved to stand upon his rights. There was, he reasoned, no disgrace in poverty, and, at any rate, there was no rule under which his claim to the rights of membership could be denied. He had not cheated at cards, nor even promoted a bogus company. Any man was liable

to be ruined by the imprudence of relatives.

Taking his way to the reading-room, Wilmot selected a comfortable arm-chair, sat down, and lit his clay pipe. Of late he had schooled himself to smoke a rank but inexpensive brand of shag. The strong odour of this tobacco seemed to excite indignation. Several elderly gentlemen coughed and wheezed, and every cough was eloquent of protest. The room was a large one, but the pungent smell of Wilmot's shag filled the air. Oddly enough, no one thought of offering the intruder a cigar. Presently the secretary of the club entered the room, and sat down near Wilmot.

"Look here!" he said bluntly: "I'm requested by several of the members to protest against this conduct."

"What conduct?" asked Wilmot. "Try a pipe of my baccy?"

"It smells more like horsehair than tobacco," returned the secretary. "You really must not smoke such stuff in the club."

"I am anxious to comply with the rules," said Wilmot, mildly; "but I don't seem to recall any that prohibits the smoking of shag."

"Do you think it quite the thing to enter the club in those clothes?" continued the secretary.

"Why, there again," said Wilmot, "I fancy I am infringing no rule. To give offence would be most painful to me, but this suit happens to be my only one."

"The flour is coming off on to the chair," protested the secretary.

"Clean dirt, my dear sir, clean dirt," said Wilmot, cheerfully.

"I see it is useless to appeal to your sense of decorum," said the secretary, as he rose. "It will be my duty to notify these complaints to the committee."

"It is my desire to conform to every printed rule of the club," said Wilmot. "I wish I could tempt you to try my baccy. I get it at a little shop at the



"OUR SECRETARY," SAID WILMOT, AIRILY.

back of Covent Garden, not far from my lodgings. Wonderful strength for the money, and a splendid disinfectant."

"Some remedies are worse than disease," snapped the secretary. He choked, and retired.

On the following evening the Life Member again visited the club. This time he was accompanied by a fellow workman, whose smell proclaimed him a gas-fitter. The hall porter demurred against the admission of this friend, but Wilmot, producing a copy of the rules, overcame the objection. The name—"Mr. Tom Bangs, Gas-fitter"—was duly inserted in the visitors' book, and they entered the hall arm-in-arm.

The secretary was standing in the hall, eyeing them with undisguised hostility.

"Our secretary," said Wilmot, airily. "An excellent secretary he is, too.

We've had him for nearly twenty-one years. There is some talk of raising his screw when he comes of age. Let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Bangs," he added. "I don't think you two have met before."

"I think it improbable," said the secretary, coldly. "Let me direct your attention to the notice-board, Mr. Wilmot."

Wilmot was not unprepared to find that two or three new rules had been provisionally made by the committee since the previous evening.

"Members," he read, "who make use of the dining-room during meal hours will in future be charged the full price of any meal in progress.

(2) "Members are not permitted to soil the chairs or lounges.

(3) "Pending the decision of the





"A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CLUB COMMITTEE."

general committee, the smoking of pipes is prohibited."

These rules interested Wilmot, but he studied with even deeper interest the following announcement:—

"IMPORTANT NOTICE.

"The committee have the pleasure of announcing that His Serene Highness Prince Gvosstoff has graciously consented to dine with the members of the Orlando Club on Friday, the 20th instant, at 8.30 p.m. Tickets (price two guineas) may be obtained from the secretary up to the 15th instant, after which date no further applications can be entertained. It is hoped that a large proportion of the members will be able to be present."

Wilmot's face grew thoughtful as he read this announcement. "Two guineas is a lot of money to spend on a dinner, eh, Mr. Bangs?" he said.

"A sight too much," agreed the gas-fitter. "Don't see how any cove could get his money's worth."

"You must allow something for the honour of seeing a prince eat," said Wilmot.

"Bah!" said the gas-fitter, who seemed to put no trust in princes.

Wilmot did not continue the subject.

"I've got nearly three pounds in the

savings' bank," he remarked inconsequently.

"Well, you needn't buck about it," growled the gas-fitter.

"No, I don't think I need," agreed Wilmot, meekly. "Come and have a look at the papers."

In anticipation of the new rules, Wilmot had provided himself with two clean sacks and two very cheap and black cigars. He secured two easy chairs, and spread the sacks upon them. Then they sat down and lit the black cigars. Within five minutes they had the room to themselves, and all the evening papers between them.

Towards nine o'clock Mr. Bangs complained of acute hunger, and quitted the club. Wilmot, after bidding him good-night, made his way to the secretary's office. The secretary looked up frowningly.

"There'll be one or two more new rules on the board to-morrow," he remarked. "You might draw the line at gas-fitters, Mr. Wilmot."

"An excellent fellow, I assure you," said Wilmot. "You were not very cordial to him, I noticed, but that isn't what I've come about. I want a ticket for the dinner."

The secretary gaped. "The price is two guineas," he said.

"Yes. I get my wages to-morrow," replied Wilmot. "I'll look in and bring the money."

A special meeting of the club committee was held two days later to consider what measures (if any) could be adopted in order to protect Prince Gvosstoff from the threatened outrage, and the club from ridicule. "He is sure to come," said Lord Fitzdoodle, "in his working clothes."

"Such disrespect to the Prince might lead to international complications," observed another member.

"Already the club has suffered," said a third, dolefully. "How can the Orlando be considered an exclusive club if gas-fitters and millers are admitted?"

A suggestion that the correct dress for the dinner should be defined was not received with favour. The committee felt that the members would feel degraded if a notice were exhibited dealing with the fundamental principles of social etiquette. It was felt, in short, that nothing could be done, and the committee clung to the hope that Wilmot would have the decency to hire a dress suit.

The momentous evening of the dinner found the club in a state of horrible anxiety. Wilmot had openly expressed the intention of dining in his usual clothes, and private remonstrances had failed to shake his most scandalous resolve. He

had not arrived, however, when Prince Gvosstoff drove up, and a few optimistic members began to hope that an impaired sense of propriety had "sprung up and choked him off." The optimists were wrong, for whilst His Serene Highness was yet in the ante-room, the news that Wilmot had arrived became known.

The Prince was humorously relating to an admiring circle how, during a recent day's sport, he had "shot at ze pheasant and hit ze peasant," when his serenity was ruffled by the uneasiness and abstraction which his hosts could not wholly conceal. Suspecting that the cook had spoilt the soup, Prince Gvosstoff repeated his joke: "I shot at ze pheasant, you understand, and hit ze——"

A polite cackle of ghastly mirth covered the hurried retreat of Lord Fitzdoodle and two other committee-men. These members, gaining the hall, held brief consultation.

"There is only one chance left," said Fitzdoodle. "We must buy his resignation. The club's reputation is at stake."

Five minutes later Digby Wilmot pocketed a cheque for £350, and ceased to be a member of the Orlando. The sheet of note-paper upon which he wrote his resignation is carefully preserved by the secretary, who had it stamped at Somerset House the next morning.





## A VOICE from the VOID. MARION WARD.

*Illustrated by W. Russell Flint*

### I.

"IT'S no good, Graham—I can't. Please don't say any more." Marjory leant one slim hand upon the table as though for support, though her small pale face and troubled eyes faced him unflinchingly.

"You love me!" he said strenuously, his grey eyes daring her to deny it.

Marjory's face went a shade paler, and she put her other hand suddenly over her eyes as though to shut out that compelling gaze.

"I cannot leave her," she murmured weakly.

A flash of triumph lit up the handsome boyish face. He strode across the room quickly, and seized the two small unresisting hands in his.

"You love me, Marjory!" he cried joyously. "Your eyes cannot deny it whatever your lips may say."

The girl raised her troubled blue eyes and looked straight at him.

"I can't help that," she said with a little sob.

He caught her to him passionately, and for a brief moment she lay passive, her brown head resting against his shoulder. Then she drew back suddenly, resisting him with both small hands pressed against his chest. "Ah! how weak I am," she said unsteadily. "It only makes things harder. It's no good, Graham," stopping the torrent of words on his lips with a quick little gesture. "I mean what I say. As long as Aunt Matty lives I cannot and will not leave her——"

"But it's wicked—it's sacrilege! Why should you, a beautiful young girl with all life before you, renounce everything for a cantankerous old harridan like that? Gratitude—bah! For eighteen years you've been nothing but a slave. A helpless, patient saint at the beck and call of that old slave-driver, snapped and snarled at, and never thanked—gratifying her every whim and fancy, however preposterous. Isn't your debt worked out yet?"

Marjory shook her head with a faint smile at his vehemence. "It never will be," she replied quietly. "Think, Graham. When I was a tiny homeless waif,



"FOR A BRIEF MOMENT SHE LAY PASSIVE, HER BROWN HEAD RESTING AGAINST HIS SHOULDER."



with nothing but the workhouse and servitude before me, she took me in, adopted me, educated, clothed, and fed me, and made me in all but blood her niece. Now she is old and helpless, and looks to me for everything, how could I callously ignore all her strong claims and leave her destitute?"

But his man's mind refused to see her woman's reasoning. He made an impatient movement. "She could hire a companion, or nurse," he said practically.

Marjory shook her head again. "What hired companion would stay with her?" she objected, "without any tie, or proper understanding of her," she added hastily, seeing his irrepressible smile of comprehension.

"I should think not," he muttered fervently.

"I am used to her," she persisted loyally, "and understand how little her irritabilities mean——"

"In other words," he broke in wrathfully, "a ridiculous saint without a life or movement to call your own. It's wrong, Marjory, I tell you. You are blinded and prejudiced by an overpowering and perverted sense of duty, but it is iniquitous and quite unreasonable. Besides, granting that you love me, do you owe no duty to me?"

She flushed up distressedly, but still shook her pretty head. "Aunt Matty comes before everyone," she maintained firmly. Then her fortitude gave way suddenly, and she looked at him with quivering lips, and eyes full of tears. "Ah, Graham," she cried piteously, "don't tempt me. Don't you see how cruel it is to me?"

He ground his teeth helplessly.

"Old vampire!" he ejaculated, with boyish fervour. "I want you, Marjory! My life is blank and empty without you. Why should one old woman ruin two lives?"

"Because my duty is here," replied the girl, steadying her pale lips. "You must go away, Graham, and forget me in your work."

He laughed drearily.

"Don't add insult to injury, Marjory," he said harshly.

She winced at his tone, and he saw it, and was overcome with remorse instantly.

"Forgive me, sweetheart," he said gently. "Wounded men speak recklessly. But it is all so twisted and wrong. Let me see her and put it before her properly"—eagerly.

"It would be no good," said Marjory, wearily. "She would never consent. She hates the idea of a nurse or any stranger about her, and would never hear of my leaving her. It is very hard, but—it must be." She held out her hand, not daring to raise her eyes. "Good-bye," she said, below her breath.

There was a little pause. Then:—

"Marjory!" he cried, hoarsely.

She nerved herself, and looked up.

He stretched out both his hands, his face white and working.

"I cannot give you up!" he cried. "Marjory, sweetheart, come!"

Her white lips moved, but no sound came. She shook her head speechlessly.

For a second he stood looking into the blue, pain-darkened, but unflinching eyes. Then he turned blindly and stumbled from the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fifteen minutes later, Marjory, very pale and with red rims round her pretty eyes, but otherwise calm and composed, entered quietly into her aunt's room.

The old woman greeted her querulously.

"Never here when you're wanted, of course," she complained, sharply. "Here I've been sitting here all alone and neglected for the past hour, when you might have known I particularly wanted you to read me that last book of Morley's on 'Psychological Research.'"

"I'm sorry, aunt," replied the girl quietly. "I did not know you wanted me."

The old woman glanced at her sharply.

"You've been crying," she denounced.

Marjory's pale face flushed scarlet ; but she made no answer. Discretion was generally the better part of valour, and also of diplomacy, where her aunt was concerned.

She picked up the book hastily.

"Shall I read to you now?" she suggested hurriedly.

The old woman's mind was diverted instantly by the mention of her favourite subject. She was the firmest and most credulous of believers in spiritualism and all things pertaining to messages and visitants from the other world, and, despite her age and infirmity, managed to attend every séance, soirée, or spiritualistic meeting she could hear of.

So now she forgot all about her niece's red eyes in her grievance.

"No!" she snapped. "What's the good of offering now? I hate people who carefully keep out of the way as long as they know they will be wanted, and then come so meek and sweet, and offer to read when they know it is too late. You know quite well it is time to get me ready for Madame L——'s séance. And I expect we shall be late as it is, all through your idle dallying."

## II.

Graham Scott sat with his elbows on the table, his chin in his palms, frowning straight before him in a brown study.

It was a strong, determined face, and it belonged to a strong, determined nature.

Win Marjory Compton and free her from her bondage he vowed he would, and Graham Scott did not make or break a vow lightly. The only question was how the deed was to be accomplished.

And so he sat and frowned before him in thought, and the hours passed by and still found him sitting there frowning, and night gave way to pale morning light, showing tired lines on his young face, and still he did not move.

But at last the first golden shaft of early sunlight came through the un-

shuttered window and fell athwart his head, and on its gilded wing it bore a sudden brilliant inspiration.

He sprang to his feet, his face aglow with hope. "The very thing!" he cried, and brought his hand down with an enthusiastic bang upon the table.

## III.

"Marjory!"

"Yes, aunt, I am coming;" and Marjory came hastily into the room.

"Always fiddling around after something or other," grumbled the old woman, quite ignoring the fact that it was she herself who had sent the girl to fetch another cushion from the bedroom. "Come here and pick up my glasses—you put them on so badly that they do nothing but fall off."

Marjory went across and patiently replaced the dropped glasses, and put the additional cushion behind her aunt's back. "Is that more comfortable?" she inquired gently.

"No—worse if anything," replied the old woman ungraciously. "Now fetch me the account of last night's soirée and read it to me."

Marjory had a soft, musical voice, and read excellently, which fact, while availing herself of it freely, Aunt Matty cantankerously refused to acknowledge.

"Don't go so fast—your words trip over each other like sheep getting through a gate," she interrupted crossly after a moment.

Marjory slackened slightly.

"You needn't wait five minutes between each word!" snapped the old woman. "How can I take in what you are saying when I am thinking all the time of the bad way you say it? Don't put on that long-suffering expression, for heaven's sake: I declare it is enough to wear out the nerves of a saint the way you can't bear to hear the slightest word of advice without losing your temper."

Marjory looked up with a gleam of



fun in her blue eyes. "I haven't lost my temper I assure you, aunt," she said good-humouredly.

"Don't argue—I hate people who are always arguing and nagging, and disagreeing about everything. And you have lost your temper too"—triumphantly—"else why don't you go on reading?"

Marjory went on.

Five minutes later she was stopped again. "I shan't go to that lecture after all," decided the old woman suddenly; "so you will be able to take Beau Brummel for a nice long saunter in the park."

"Herr Schubert is going to speak," reminded Marjory, tentatively.

"I don't care. I have made up my mind not to go, so you needn't waste breath trying to persuade me."

Marjory glanced across towards the window. "Oh!" she observed, "it's raining; so it's just as well you don't want to go, aunt."

Instantly the contradictory old mind veered round, and, of all things in the world, Aunt Matilda's soul yearned to attend that lecture.

"How very annoying!" she exclaimed crossly.

Marjory opened her eyes. "Why?" she asked innocently. "I thought you had made up your mind to stop at home?"

"Ah, but I had forgotten Herr Schubert," declared the other unblushingly. "I particularly wanted to hear his experiences. Go and look out, Marjory, and see if it means to be much."

Marjory went across obediently, and scanned the heavy clouds carefully. "I'm afraid it does," she announced. "It's coming down fast now, and there isn't a break anywhere."

"Well, I want to attend that lecture," argued Aunt Matilda.

Marjory said nothing.

"Plague take the rain! I shall go anyway," came the next ultimatum.

Marjory ventured a timid remonstrance.

"Aunt Matty! remember your rheumatism," she expostulated.

"I'm going," said Aunt Matty, setting her lips grimly. "Ring the bell, will you, and tell Matthews to bring the brougham round in twenty minutes, punctually."

And in twenty minutes, punctually, despite the heavy downpour, the old woman, wrapped in a long ulster and muffled to the chin in shawls, emerged triumphantly, and entered the waiting carriage, followed by the slim figure of the long-suffering niece.

\* \* \* \* \*

Round the corner of the square, at the exact moment of the carriage's drawing up, lurked a broad macintoshed figure, which, had Aunt Matilda seen it, would have excited her instant suspicion, by its peculiar proceedings. First, it bobbed forward, and bobbed back again instantly on perceiving the carriage. Then, on the opening of the hall door, it bobbed cautiously round again, and watched anxiously the disappearance of the two cloaked figures into the depths of the brougham. And finally, as it drove smoothly off, it emerged wholly, and, running lightly up the wet steps, played a smart tattoo on the door-knocker.

The footman who opened it smiled at him sympathetically. "She's just this minute gone out, sir, with the old lady," he pronounced, without waiting for the other to speak.

Graham Scott flushed a little at the subtlety of the man's perception, but tried to carry it off with a high hand. "Oh, that's all right, James," he said, airily. "I only wanted to borrow a book I was promised. I'll just run up, and get it." And passing the amiable footman, he ran lightly up the stairs, and into the room the two women had just vacated.

Once there, he closed the door carefully, then, hastily undoing his long

cloak, he tenderly drew forth a small black box, with a white dial like the face of a clock let into its side. This he placed upon the table, while he carefully moved the hands to a certain point. "Half-past," he murmured. "She's certain to be alone, then." Then he walked up to the quaint, old carved clock-case, with its inlaid cabinets on either side, and, mounting on a chair, secreted the little box within one of the little empty cabinets, leaving the door slightly ajar.

Then he sprang down with a soft little laugh, and went swiftly down the stairs again.

The sympathetic James was waiting patiently to let him out. "Did you find it, sir?" he inquired respectfully.

"Eh?" queried Graham, vaguely. "Oh: the book. No, it isn't there. I'll call again when they are in."

"Yes, sir," replied James.

"And James—er—you needn't mention I called."

"No, sir," replied James, without moving a muscle.

Graham turned back, his eyes shining with excitement. "You might as well tell Miss Compton though," he said, as though with an afterthought, "that I particularly want to see her, and will call in about an hour or so."

"Yes, sir," replied the sphinx-like James.

At four o'clock exactly, the brougham drove up again and deposited its two inmates on their own threshold.

"Now," observed Aunt Matty, when she was once more snugly ensconced in her warm armchair beside the fire, "it has quite left off raining: there will just be time for you to take Beau for a nice little run and exchange those books at Mudie's before tea-time." Marjory groaned inwardly. That same pug, fat, wheezy, and contradictory as his mistress, was the detestation of her life, and she had just been congratulating herself on her escape from the usual afternoon's penance. She tried hard

to keep her disappointment from her face.

"Very well, aunt," she said meekly, and went to fetch him.

#### IV.

Aunt Matty was dozing in her chair, dreaming of the psychological wonders she had been listening to that afternoon.

The hands of the quaint old clock crept round till they reached the half-hour. It proclaimed the fact musically. Aunt Matty did not stir.

At the same instant there came a faint, whirring little noise and click, like the running down of a small clock, and suddenly, mysteriously, apparently from up in the air sounded a voice. "Matilda!" it said solemnly.

Aunt Matty opened her eyes and looked all round. Then she sat up suddenly. "Matilda!" came again, still more solemnly.

Aunt Matty's glasses fell off, showing her eyes wide, and round with awe. "Who is it?" she asked almost beneath her breath.

"Can you not see me, Matilda?" went on the unearthly voice. "Here, over in the corner by the clock-case. . . ."

Aunt Matilda trembled with ecstasy. At last was the dream of her life fulfilled, and a message from the mysterious other world had been vouchsafed to her, and to her alone. She leant forward in her chair, and so great was her faith and excitement, that she honestly believed she could distinguish a faint, unearthly mist in the corner named.

"Yes," she breathed, clasping her hands tightly together, "I can see you. Who are you, and what have you come to say?"

"I am the spirit of Marjory's departed mother," proclaimed the voice solemnly, "sent down to denounce you and your cruelty to that gentle, uncomplaining girl. . . ."

Aunt Matty gasped. "Cruelty?" she echoed. "I! who saved her from the gutter?"



But the spirit went on unheeding :—  
 “For eighteen years has that child  
 toiled and slaved for you untiringly,  
 waiting on you hand and foot, railed at,  
 complained of, and retaliating only by  
 renewed kindness. True, in the first  
 instance you gave her a home—the one  
 gentle act of your hard, selfish life—but  
 how doubly—trebly—has she repaid  
 you for that! What would you have  
 done without her ministration and un-  
 selfishness all these years? And yet  
 day by day you grow more querulous  
 and exacting, and although you are  
 perfectly well aware that she has now  
 arrived at an age when all young girls  
 dream of love, and a home of their own  
 —although you are perfectly well aware  
 that she is eating her heart out with  
 love for that worthy and wealthy young  
 man, Graham Scott—yet you would  
 sacrifice both their young lives for the  
 selfish indulgence of your own plea-  
 sure—”

“Neither has ever said a word to me  
 on the subject,” protested Aunt Matty  
 in self-defence.

“Knowing well,” continued the con-  
 demning voice without a pause, “that in  
 her exaggerated and mistaken sense of  
 gratitude the child of her own free will  
 would never leave you without your  
 consent. But retribution is coming,  
 Matilda. . . . Pause while there is  
 yet time . . . or . . . repent  
 for ever. . . .”

“What am I to do?” cried Aunt  
 Matty in unfeigned terror. “What  
 must I do?”

There was a little pause. Then,  
 slowly and solemnly, the voice began  
 again :—

“In a short while, Matilda, you, too,  
 will have joined our ranks. Make what  
 amends you can in the time that is left  
 you. Consent to the union of those  
 two young lives. Set your niece free,  
 taking in her place to minister to you  
 some poor and deserving trained nurse.  
 Cultivate a more resigned and less  
 exacting disposition, and mention to no

one on earth the great favour that has  
 been shown you by this my visit and  
 warning. . . . This do, and all shall  
 be well with you. But . . . fail in  
 the slightest respect . . . and your  
 spirit shall know no rest, but shall be  
 forced to wander about homeless, weary,  
 and shunned by every denizen of this  
 aerial world. . . . Ponder my words  
 and . . . farewell.”

The solemn voice stopped, and its  
 last echoes died slowly away.

Aunt Matty breathed hard and fast.  
 “And if I do all you say,” she besought  
 breathlessly; “will you come to me  
 again?”

There was no answer.

She bent forward, listening intently.  
 “Spirit, good spirit, answer me!” she  
 implored.

But no answer broke the dead silence.  
 Aunt Matty sat back in her chair, her  
 whole face working with a great and  
 supreme joy. “At last,” she murmured  
 exaltedly, “at last.”

## V.

At a quarter to five Marjory came  
 wearily back, exhausted morally and  
 physically by her alternate struggles  
 against dragging, or being dragged by,  
 the amiable Beau Brummel. To her  
 surprise she found her aunt sitting bolt  
 upright waiting for her, her face wreathed  
 with such beatific smiles as never before  
 had Marjory beheld on that sour old  
 visage.

“Come here, Marjory,” she hailed her  
 eagerly, as the girl entered the room.

Marjory obeyed wonderingly.

“Kneel down,” she commanded, still  
 wreathed in smiles, “I want to look at  
 you.”

Marjory knelt down, surveying those  
 unprecedented smiles with her blue eyes  
 as wide as they would go. “Let me see  
 —how old are you?” commented Aunt  
 Matty. “Twenty next June, isn’t it?  
 Ah! old enough to be beginning to  
 think about getting married, I suppose?”

Marjory flushed scarlet. “I shall



"‘AT LAST,’ SHE MURMURED, EXALTEDLY, ‘AT LAST.’"

never leave you, Aunt Matty," she replied firmly.

"Hoity toity!" cried the old woman, playfully. "How conceited we are! Do you suppose I could not get on quite as well without you? Not but what

you have been a good niece to me, Marjory," she added hastily, with a quick little glance at the old clock-case. "But I've been thinking this afternoon about you and—various things, and a little bird whispered a little secret



to me about that young fellow Graham Scott who comes here so politely to ask after my health."

Marjory's blushes scorched her.

"How—how did you guess?" she murmured.

Aunt Matty was enjoying herself hugely in her new character of benevolent guardian.

"Ah!" she replied, cunningly, "there are more things in heaven and earth than your limited intelligence guesses, my dear. A little bird told me. And it whispered also that you have been a good, industrious, and fairly obedient girl all your life, and that it was time you had some reward. So I have been thinking, and I have come to the conclusion that if that same young Graham Scott *should* ever ask you to be his wife, and if you should feel inclined to say 'Yes'—well, I for one should be pleased to give you my blessing."

Marjory's face was white now, but her eyes were filled with a glorious hope.

"But you, Aunt Matty?" she faltered. "What would you do——"

"Pooh!" said the old woman airily; "I should manage perfectly well with

some poor, deserving trained nurse to look after me. I should not think of letting any selfish self-indulgence interfere with your happiness, my child—of that you may be assured."

Marjory stooped and kissed her impulsively.

"How good you are, Aunt Matty," she cried, contritely, her eyes full of tears. "But I don't like leaving you. I don't think——"

"Don't be nonsensical, child," interrupted her aunt brusquely. "I tell you, I *desire* you to get married."

Marjory left the room with her heart thumping and her head in a whirl.

In the corridor she ran against the sphinx-like James.

"Beg pardon, Miss," he said respectfully, "but the young gentleman Mr. Scott is downstairs, and would like to speak to you for a moment."

Marjory turned round, fled down the stairs like a whirlwind into the library, and straight, without a pause, into the arms stretched out to receive her.

The sympathetic James followed softly, and discreetly closed the door she had left open behind her.

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## OLD AND NEW

By WILLIAM FRANCIS BARNARD

IT was the death hour of the dying Year—

A voice from out the silence spake to me:

"I brought thee days; what shall I have from thee  
For honour, when I rest upon my bier?

Thou hast been prey of weakness: halting fear,

Wild aims and folly—little else I see;

Art thou that life with spirit strong and free,  
Which hailed me coming? Lo, my end is near!"

Just then joy-bells rang out on every side,

And with brave sound thrilled all the echoes through:

New hopes, new strength, and inspiration new  
Arose within me, and a noble pride.

The white Year called: "Thou mayest yet be true!"  
And looked compassionately as he died.



By W. G. YARCOTT

**B**LANKTON BROTHERS, diamond merchants, were not doing well. The firm was of recent establishment, having been in existence but three or four years. The first twelve months' business was excellent; the next was only fairly satisfactory; the last year they had barely cleared expenses; and immediate prospects were wretched. The concern was not of the Bond Street and glass case variety. Although the turnover was fairly large, but little clerical work attached, and the whole staff consisted of the Blankton Brothers (Philip and Alexander), a general clerk, and an office boy, known as Johnny. Johnny is an important factor in this lamentably immoral story.

The firm's premises were two rooms near Hatton Garden, the larger occupied by the clerk and Johnny, the smaller and inner room being used by the two brothers. A speaking tube connected Johnny's desk with the table of Alexander (the senior partner), and the whistle at Alexander's end was lost.

The clerk was at lunch (twelve till one). Alexander was in the private room, meditating. The boy was seated at his desk perusing the morning newspaper. As an appreciative student of

humour, Johnny would not have missed his morning paper for a great deal, for an anonymous genius was then contributing to its advertisement columns that series of delightful parodies now celebrated the world over as "Whitsto's Waggeries."

The genius had been genuinely inspired in that morning's edition. Johnny had read the Wagserie advertisement four times and had chuckled consumedly each time. He was again reading and again chuckling, when Philip Blankton suddenly entered the office.

Philip had had a bad morning. He had been outmanœuvred in a rather shady transaction, where he had confidently anticipated coming out on top, and he was filled with disgust at the other man's duplicity. Johnny's obvious enjoyment annoyed him, and, as Johnny afterwards expressed it, "he fetched me a wopping clump on the 'ed, and went inside," leaving the victim of his ill-temper blazing with wrath and moist in the eyes.

Philip poured his sorrow into the ear of brother Alexander, and wound up his recital with a gloomy prophecy concerning bankruptcy.

"Bankruptcy?" repeated Alexander. "It is fate! It is more than coinci-



dence. It is fate! For the last two hours I have been considering that possibility and its advisability myself."

Philip's jaw dropped.

"But we are solvent," he gasped.

"H'm! Just about," answered his brother. "And we are making nothing at all. I have, I fancy, given a little more consideration to the position than you have, so if you will give me your attention I will place the facts before you."

"We have a stock, mainly uncut stones, worth about seven thousand pounds. There are also in existence bills accepted by us to the value of a hundred or so over that amount. These will mature within the next three months. Consequently, we are really worth a hundred or two less than nothing. Ah! you didn't know things were quite so bad. Eh? Now, I can see a way to clear about five thousand pounds in the next few weeks. Five thousand is a very useful sum, and a great deal can be done with it—in some parts of the world."

"Something very fishy, I can see," commented Philip. "Go on; I'm game for nearly anything."

"Very good! As I said, our stock is worth about seven thousand pounds."

He paused, dwelling on the amount wisely; then continued slowly:—

"If, by any catastrophe, we should be deprived of the greater part of this stock, I fear we should have to file our petition, and——"

Philip interrupted brusquely.

"Look here. If it's the bogus burglary game, broken safe, and all the rest of it—it won't do. It's too dangerous, and besides——"

Alexander raised a subduing hand and Philip ceased. Alexander continued:—

"As you say, as you say. The bogus burglary, safe, and gagged custodian business has been overdone; but you might give me credit for something a little less obvious. Who is the most

enthusiastic collector of uncut diamonds in the world?"

"John Treelar," said Philip, promptly.

"Exactly," said Alexander; "John Treelar. An eccentric person, very. Wanders the world spasmodically. Has a huge house in Brooklyn, a castle in Spain, a villa at Monte Carlo, and an establishment in the outskirts of Richmond, Surrey, where we once did a deal with him."

Philip was listening eagerly now.

"On a day in the near future we shall receive a letter from John Treelar, Esquire, dated from his house in Richmond, to the effect that he is on a flying visit there, and would like to see some of our stock. Do you remember his place at Richmond? I do. It is a fair-sized house standing some way back in small grounds with a private road leading to it from the main London route."

"This letter will reach us in the afternoon, and state that if we desire to do any more business with him we must wait upon him at his residence at eight o'clock that evening. At eight o'clock it will be growing dark. Most unfortunately I shall have been unwell and be recuperating at Brighton, say, when this letter arrives, so you will be acting entirely upon your own responsibility. However, you are as innocent as a lamb, and the letter will seem genuine enough (I'll see to that), consequently you start off gaily—and if by any chance it shall all be some rascally scheme got up by some rogue who knows of our previous business with Treelar, and forcibly relieves you of those uncut diamonds, I'm really afraid we shall be driven into bankruptcy. You understand?"

He emitted a series of chuckles.

"Rather," said Philip, with a curious silent shoulder-shaking laugh.

For nearly a minute their mutual amusement lasted. Then Alexander composed his face and observed thoughtfully:—

"Of course, I shall have to knock you

about a bit. You must show signs of a struggle, you see, and all that sort of thing."

Philip gazed blankly at his meditative brother.

"Really!" was the limit of his comment.

"Oh, yes," said Alexander, firmly. "You must, of course, give me a reasonable time to clear off, then make your way to the police office and lodge the news of the assault and robbery. I—in disguise, of course—can catch the eighty-five train back to town, and so back to Brighton. Then, I think, the course will be fairly clear for the petition and two shillings in the pound. I should say we retain enough of the old craftsmanship to cut and alter a few stones, eh?"

He dug a forefinger into his brother's waistcoat.

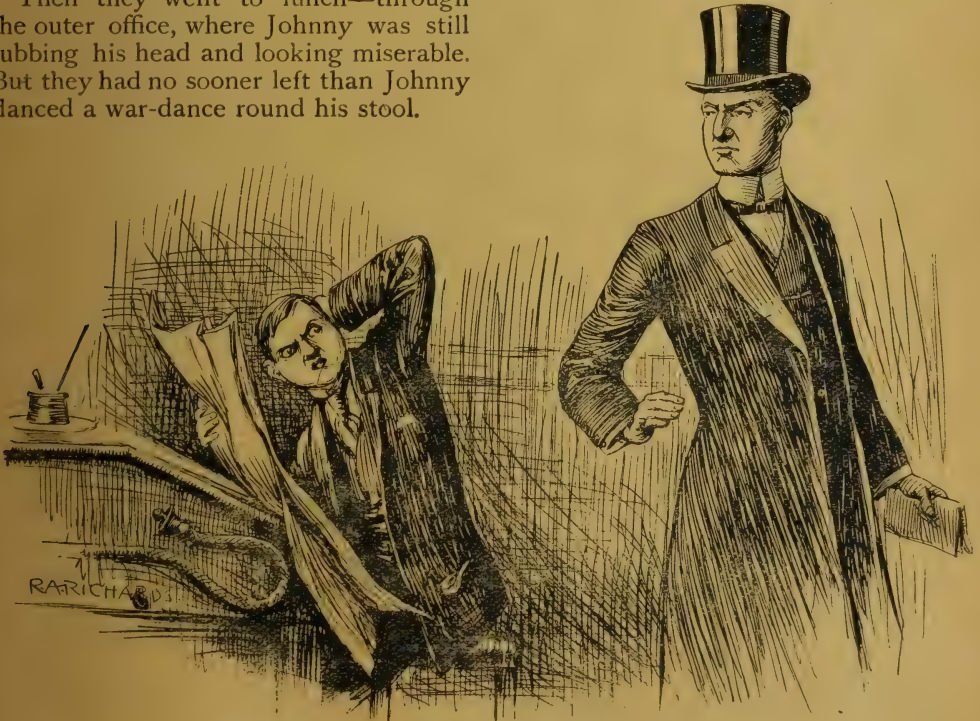
"Ugh!" grunted Philip. "Should think so!"

Then they went to lunch—through the outer office, where Johnny was still rubbing his head and looking miserable. But they had no sooner left than Johnny danced a war-dance round his stool.

"Oh, you pair of old frauds!" he observed. "Won't I have you on toast! Whoop! Whoopee! Yes, sir!"—this to the clerk, who entered at the moment. "Sorry, sir. Got a 'orrible toothache, sir. Makes me feel mad-like."

In due course Alexander grew "seedy," as he termed it, and departed to Brighton to recuperate; and one afternoon the pregnant letter arrived, couched in the strain indicated when the plot was projected. Philip immediately displayed signs of excitement, and the clerk was hugely gratified by the letter being shown to him, with a request to hunt up the trains in Bradshaw. As he observed, in confidence to Johnny, "the guv'nor appeared to be growing more appreciative-like." Johnny said "Yes," and immediately afterwards sent off a telegram on his own account.

During Alexander's indisposition,



"HE FETCHED ME A WOPPING CLUMP ON THE 'ED, AND WENT INSIDE."



Philip, as became a loving brother and dutiful partner, wrote to him each evening an account of the day's doings, and the happy confidence of good business to be done with John Treelar which permeated his letter that evening should have cheered the invalid extremely. The pair humbugged with artistic thoroughness.

Richmond—bathed in the afterglow of the sunset; a clear, soft sky overhead; a fringe of gold and purple cloud in the west; and the big silver first star swimming half-way up the horizon. A pleasing picture that even Philip appreciated. In truth, he was in appreciative mood. Their disgraceful plot seemed to promise very well.

He was in no particular hurry. It wanted nearly a half-hour of eight o'clock, so he strolled along very leisurely. The little canvas bag containing the stones he carried in an inside coat pocket. A cyclist slid by him and vanished into the deepening dusk in front. Had he been a devotee of the wheel, he would have noticed two things—the very silent running of that cycle and its remarkably high gear.

The private lane that led to John Treelar's house wound away from the road in a half-circle, and Alexander had arranged to be waiting about half-way along it. However, Philip had barely left the highway when he became aware of an extraordinary blaze of light and coloured fire all around him, followed by complete darkness and absolute silence. Half a minute later the highly-g geared bicycle before mentioned was dragged from the shelter of a hedge and ridden away at a furious pace.

An hour elapsed. Then Philip noticed a star blinking at him, and became conscious of excruciating pains in the back of his head and the muscles of the neck. In addition, something was painfully irritating his face. As his wits came back he discovered that he was lying in a most uncomfortable position at the bottom of a damp ditch,

his head resting amidst a bed of stinging nettles. He crawled out, shook himself, and decided that his brother was far too realistic.

Awhile later he presented himself, damp, limp and miserable at the Police Station and unfolded to the inspector in charge a terrible tale. This is the inspector's mental summary.

"Smart hand at work. Discovered Blankton Bros. had done biz with Treelar before. Bided his time. Faked letter. H'm; probably more than one at work. Waited Blankton in the lane and sand-bagged him. Blankton might have suspected, but previous biz done similar circumstances. H'm; Philip Blankton not very cute, rather hysterical."

The worthy inspector was mistaken in regard to Philip, however, for his demeanour at the station was acting that had almost a touch of genius. He offered a reward of £2,500 for the recovery of the stones and a further £100 for the capture of the thief, with a munificence born of the knowledge that he would never have to pay. He then wired the news to Alexander.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is very early morn. The main road from London to Dover bends here, and in the hollow formed by a curve, a cluster of trees and undergrowth forms a tiny wood.

A bird chirps. Slowly a tremulous twitter arises, spreads from tree to tree, and swells into a grand chorale. The colours of the dawn fade, and the rim of the sun peeps into the sky line.

On a bed of ferns lies the figure of a man. He stirs, yawns, and stretches his limbs. As he possess in his being a tinge of poesy, he will surely feel the magic of the moment and respond to the voice of nature.

He speaks.

"Drat them birds!"

He is not a poet. He is a tramp. His name is Frowsey.

The present tense has served. Now to drop it. Frowsey sat up, extracted



"WAITED BLANKTON IN THE LANE AND SAND-BAGGED HIM."

some food from his red handkerchief bundle, and ate. He was not a nice man. The majority of nervous people would rather not have seen him. Nor was he reclaimed by any of the Ulysses-like attributes of Kipling's Tramp-Royal. "My mate, the wind that tramps the world," bore him no meaning. He was a little-souled and utterly disreputable person. Yet he formed in chain with the advertisement writer who so amused Johnny, in this deplorable affair of the Blankton diamonds.

His fast broken, he trudged along the road at the regular tramp's gait, sunk in the lethargy of laziness, and presently

saw something that pulled him up sharply. It was a bicycle considerably damaged lying half in and half out of the roadside ditch. A couple of yards beyond it was its owner on his side, one leg curiously twisted underneath him and a trickle of blood fresh on his face. Frowsey approached the motionless form rather nervously, and found that it still breathed.

Barely ten minutes had elapsed between the accident and Frowsey's advent, and the cyclist was yet unconscious. Two courses presented themselves to Frowsey's mind. He could either try to restore the victim to his senses and get assistance from the



nearest village, or he could go through the cyclist's pockets and quit the neighbourhood as speedily as possible. Without any hesitation he chose the latter alternative. A most abandoned ruffian!

Thus Frowsey became the possessor of several sovereigns, a handful of silver, and the little canvas bag of diamonds. These latter being in the rough, and Frowsey not being an expert, he was rather doubtful about them. Frowsey's attire was as disreputable as his morals were lax. He hadn't a sound pocket on him. The three sixpences and the odd coppers that had hitherto formed his share of the world's wealth he carried tied up in a piece of rag in his bundle, or, to be technical, his "swag." In the same swag he secured his new treasure, and went on his way sodden with joy.

By seven o'clock Frowsey had travelled several miles from the scene of the accident, and was passing through a little country lane.

Augustus Blinn, retired circus performer, had wearied of travel, bought a small house in the country, and merged all the various interests in his life in one—his orchard. This was not one of those orchards where the trees overhang the way and dangle temptation before small boys who really don't require tempting. A hedge and a wide strip of grass intervened between the road and the line of apple-trees, which, studded with delicious fruit, drew Frowsey as he passed as a magnet does a needle.

He broke through the hedge and crossed the grass, to meet with a slight check, for the particular cluster of apples that he desired were out of reach. Nothing but the best would suit Frowsey, and experience taught him that this cluster was the very best in sight. He placed his swag on the ground, and caught hold of the lowest branch to swing himself up, when he suddenly changed his mind, and a moment later was flying for life to the road, with a fox-terrier snapping at his heels and a weighty bull dog two yards

behind. They chased him a mile from the place, while a French poodle, once the pride of Blinn's Marvellous Performing Dogs (see small bills), triumphantly bore Frowsey's swag to his astonished master.

\* \* \* \* \*

Responding to Philip's telegram, Alexander arrived in London soon after noon, and drove in a cab direct to the office. The clerk was again at lunch, and he passed through to the inner room, scowling in reply to Johnny's polite "Good morning, sir." The door closed with a slam. Johnny choked with quiet laughter, and applied the speaking tube to his ear.

Within their sanctum, Philip awaited Alexander in feverish excitement. When the latter arrived Philip greeted him with a painful smile, and gingerly rubbed his head.

"Your methods, my dear brother, are very forcible," he said.

"What d'ye mean?" snarled Alexander. "Why the deuce weren't you there at the appointed time? I waited as long as I dared for you. Now the whole game is spoilt. We can't work it again."

"What on earth do *you* mean?" said Philip, his eyelids snapping. "Not there. Waited as long as you dared. You're mad!"

"Mad, am I!" returned Alexander. "Oh, yes; very mad. I ask what the dickens *you* mean by not turning up. I waited as long as possible, and only caught the last train back to Brighton by the skin of my teeth."

"Look here, what sort of game are you playing?" demanded Philip, wrathfully. "I was there as arranged, and went through it, too, as you know very well. If you fancy you are going to bluff *me* in this business——"

"Bluff *you*!" cried Alexander. "You're a nice one to be bluffed, you are. Had me completely, you fancy; don't you? Think you're going to work the double dodge on me, my worthy brother; don't you?"

His voice rose shrilly. Johnny had never enjoyed anything so much in all his life.

"Hush, for goodness sake," said Philip.

A period of mutual re-  
crimination followed. Each  
was convinced that the other  
was playing false. Philip  
assuming that the thing had  
gone through all right, and  
Alexander now intended to  
cheat him out of the ulti-  
mate spoil ; and Alexander  
certain that Philip's tale was  
a lie, and that he'd never  
turned up at all.

Alexander had the most  
excitable temperament, and  
presently punched Philip in  
the nose. A short but  
business-like rough and  
tumble followed, in which  
both were severely mauled.  
In the thick of it Johnny  
entered, bearing a yellow  
envelope.

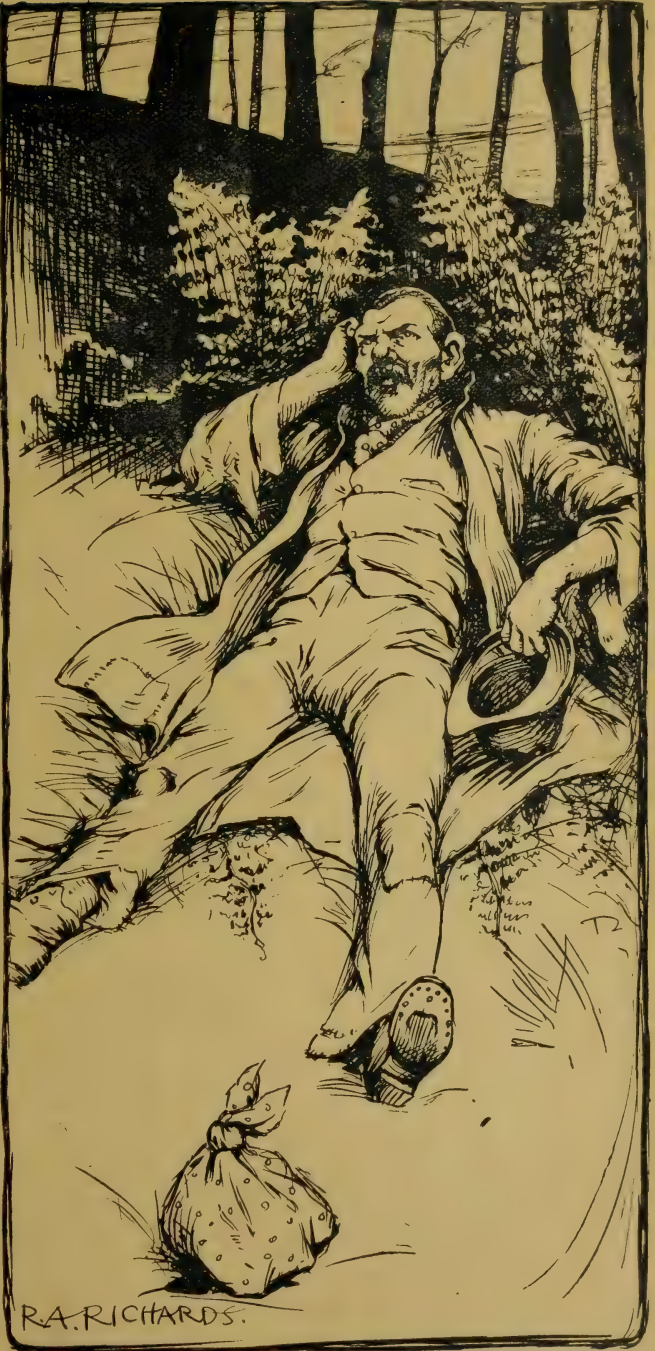
"Telegram, sir," he said,  
with the face of a stone image.

It was from the Police  
Authorities.

"Diamonds recovered.  
Found, orchard, Augustus  
Blinn, Appleyard, Kent.  
Tramp's bundle. Are  
following clue. Blinn claims  
reward."

Thus Blankton Brothers  
(cunning rogues) lose £250,  
which amount Augustus  
Blinn receives. Frowsey (a  
most disreputable person)  
loses even that which he  
had. The cyclist (Johnny's  
brother) spent five weeks in  
hospital, and Johnny him-  
self gets nothing at all.

On the whole—very satis-  
factory.



"HE IS NOT A POET."





## A Storm in a Breakfast-Cup

By TRISTRAM CRUTCHLEY

*Illustrated by Berta Ruck*

MISS PINKERTON had not only successfully passed the age of ideals, but had also survived the period usually dedicated to disillusionment, yet she always made a point of being down early for breakfast. Punctuality in the rural seclusion of her own house she regarded as an absolute necessity on account of the corresponding effect it had upon the servants. When paying visits it served as a mute protest against any possible accusation of fading youth. But when, as in the present case, she was called upon to spend certain days and nights under the same roof as some people who had recently been married, Miss Pinkerton regarded herself in a semi-judicial light, and made a point of early rising in order to obtain as close a survey as possible of the general domestic arrangements and the morning's correspondence.

On this occasion, however, Mrs. Henshaw was close upon her heels. She had been described by a fellow woman as "ridiculously pretty, and absurdly in love with her husband."

Miss Pinkerton's accusation against her as a hostess would probably be one of "inconvenient enthusiasm."

"Good-morning, Miss Pinkerton! I hope you slept well."

"As well as could be expected, my dear." Miss Pinkerton had forgotten herself in taking a comprehensive view of Mrs. Henshaw's toilette. When she had summed it up, from lack of other faults as "too bridal to be in good taste," she suddenly remembered herself again.

"Thank heaven, my dear, I am young enough to be able to sleep anywhere—on a board if necessary."

"But surely—I didn't think—there was a spring mattress, you know, as well as a feather bed." With a feeling blended of indignation and wounded pride, Mrs. Henshaw was unfortunate enough to blush, a weakness for which Miss Pinkerton had no patience whatever.

"That's just it, my dear," she said with a sigh that savoured of resignation, "of course, you didn't know it; but ever since I was a girl very young—er—quite a child, in fact, I have been brought up

in an atmosphere of Spartan severity. My dear father——”

“Well, I’ll make a change to-night,” interrupted her hostess, hurriedly. She had a faint recollection that Jack had warned her to nip in the bud all allusions that Miss Pinkerton might make to her dear father.

Thinking she had done it a little brusquely, she added with a smile:—

“Come and help me sort the letters, will you?”

Miss Pinkerton was only too delighted.

“They seem to be nearly all for your husband,” she said.

“No! See, some are for me! Ah! the African mail. That’s from Bob Waters. He was quite an old sweetheart of mine.”

Miss Pinkerton looked shocked.

“Oh, I assure you, he’s become quite a dear friend to both of us. And of course Jack sees all his letters.”

Miss Pinkerton lowered the ends of her mouth and sniffed.

“I don’t want to be inquisitive, my dear, but do *you* make friends with all your husband’s old sweethearts?”

The question was in the nature of an

indiscretion, for a few years previously Miss Pinkerton, all one long summer vacation, had made ardent love to Jack Henshaw in the sheltering atmosphere



“THE AFRICAN MAIL.”

of a country tennis club, and had never quite recovered from her failure to secure him. Consequently Mrs. Henshaw’s answer, made in all innocence, fanned into leaping flame the dimming embers of her resentment.



"Oh! Yes, of course, when I can find them." Then, with a wistful look of extreme pride, "I love to show them what they have missed."

Had the wound been intentional Miss Pinkerton would probably have lowered her colours. Knowing it to be otherwise, such is the inconsistency of at least one of the sexes, she nailed them to the mast—the colours of a great grievance—and resolved that, by some means or other, this absurdly peaceful household must be made to feel the effects of her resuscitated disappointment.

It occurred to her that the conversation then pending was pretty well calculated to bring her within view of her end; so she continued it.

"But do you also read all the letters your husband receives from his old sweethearts?"

"It is a point of honour between us never to read each other's correspondence." This rather haughtily.

"Now, at whose suggestion was that arrangement come to?" Miss Pinkerton put the question in a way that suggested the pain of a foregone and unfavourable conclusion.

"Really, I don't know," replied Mrs. Henshaw, in a tone of vexation, "but I think it was mutual."

"Of course, my dear, I meant nothing unpleasant. What I meant was—does he show you the letters he receives corresponding to those you get from Mr.—er—Waters?"

Young wives are proverbially sensitive, and in face of all this worldly wisdom Mrs. Henshaw was almost upset. But she showed a smiling front, although her voice was a little tremulous.

"Of course not. There are no such letters, or he would mention it."

Miss Pinkerton, unwilling to lose her prey by any lack of skill, maintained a discreet and eloquent silence. Finding three letters in Jack's bundle addressed by unmistakably feminine hands, she ventured, *pianissimo*, on another sniff.

On one of the letters the stamp was crooked—a sign that undoubtedly meant a kiss. This Miss Pinkerton placed on top, and waved the three before her hostess's eyes.

Mrs. Henshaw, however, though the colour in her cheeks was a little heightened, refused to accept the implication, and, with an air of gaiety that was not altogether real, opened one of her own letters.

"This is from Kate—Mrs Tracey. She used to be my great chum. I think you know her, do you not?"

"By reputation only," replied Miss Pinkerton, with severity. As a matter of fact, the name was entirely strange to her.

Mrs. Henshaw realised that the only possible course was to be irrelevant.

"She writes such nice letters. Just listen to this: 'My darling Grace,—What an age since we last met! It makes such a difference to me, your being so far away. I miss you terribly. Now, I want to see you particularly about all sorts of arrangements for the summer; so, if you can tear yourself away from the partner of your joys and sorrows—who will, I daresay, manage to exist without you for a bit—I should like you to come and lunch with me to-morrow (Wednesday), at 1.30. If you come, I am prepared to overlook your comparative neglect of me since your marriage. If you don't—beware! Yours ever, Kate.'"

Miss Pinkerton's face softened.

"What a delightful, girlish letter! May I read it again?"

Influenced by the note of conciliation in her guest's voice, Mrs. Henshaw's spirits rose with a bound, and she handed the letter over with a smile.

Miss Pinkerton read it, then looked for a few seconds into space. Her mind was engaged in a process which, from a precautionary point of view, is highly to be recommended. In fact, she was "wondering if she dared."

The result was apparently an affirma-

tive one, for she handed back the letter with what seemed to be an entirely spontaneous smile. The delightfully simple, feebly sarcastic femininity of the letter seemed to have warmed into life once more the prematurely withered instincts of her heart.

"I suppose you never have a game with Jack," she suggested, almost timidly; "get him into a little temper, for instance, just for the pleasure of undeceiving him the next moment, eh?"

"Really," replied Mrs. Henshaw, somewhat surprised, "I haven't done so. I don't know whether he'd like it."

"Oh! it's wonderfully effective," said Miss Pinkerton, with an air of authority. "He would think you quite clever if, for instance, you succeeded in frightening him with that letter."

"Frighten him? How? I really don't——"

"Why, don't you see? Read the letter again!"

Mrs. Henshaw did so, but still looked bewildered.

"Stupid! stupid! Just knock out the word 'Grace,' and you have a most delightful love-letter from an unknown woman."

Mrs. Henshaw began to see. The idea was silly, but, after all, if it would please this somewhat difficult creature, what harm was there in it? And Jack would only be a bit astonished for the moment.

"But he knows her writing," she objected; "and, beside, how would you do away with the 'Grace'?"

"I'll rewrite it."

Without more ado Miss Pinkerton frisked to a writing-table that stood by the window, and hurriedly seized a pen.

Meanwhile, Jack Henshaw, blissfully ignorant of what was in store for him, proceeded quietly with his toilet. When occupied in this manner he usually relieved his solitude by whistling snatches of song, but on this particular morning his spirits were not quite so high as usual.

Miss Pinkerton had got upon his nerves, and he rather regretted that his wife had thought it necessary to send her the invitation that she had so persistently "fished" for ever since they had returned from their honeymoon. However, the situation had to be faced. The invitation, he reflected, extended for two more days, and it was, therefore, senseless to dawdle about in his dressing-room to escape an extra five minutes.

Jack Henshaw was by no means dull, and his foot had hardly crossed the threshold of his breakfast-room before he scented something decidedly unusual in the manner of his wife and her guest. At ordinary times he would have cheerfully inquired if there had been a rise in *chiffon*, or uttered some equally inane pleasantry to prove his lightness of heart. But to-day he was not in his most jovial mood, and he experienced a slight sinking feeling, as he faced the chilling atmosphere of an impending storm.

With an affection of cheerfulness, he said "Good-morning," noted the fact that his salutation was unanswered, and then sat down. Miss Pinkerton did not think she could eat anything; she was far too upset. Grace declined his offer of scrambled egg with a tearful but dignified, "No, thank you." So, with something like alarm, Jack helped himself to some breakfast, and ran through his letters. Not a word was spoken. His sensations were something like those of a passenger on the Twopenny Tube when the train stops in the tunnel between stations. At last he could stand it no longer, and, summoning up his courage, he asked, in a feebly sarcastic tone:—

"What in the name of all that's wonderful is the matter this morning?"

At this his wife, who had never frowned on him since their marriage, gave him a look which he found difficult to analyse, and which left him even more bewildered than before. It started with something suspiciously like a smile and ended in a long-drawn sigh, the



effect of which on a devoted husband should have been heartbreaking. This sigh was apparently the safety-valve of a long-suppressed emotion, for Mrs. Henshaw rose hurriedly from the table and went to the window, only presenting to her husband's astonished gaze the spectacle of a pair of shoulders heaving convulsively.

Now, when a woman's shoulders acquire that movement, there is usually a prevailing accompaniment of grief ranging between hysterical sobbing and intermittent sniffing.

Jack was experienced enough to know this, and from that moment he entertained a glimmering suspicion—or was it hope?—that he was being laughed at. But if this were so, he reflected, Miss Pinkerton must be in it; and her face at that moment was the very reverse of humorous. Almost appealingly Jack turned in her direction.

"Perhaps you can throw some light upon this mystery," he suggested, judiciously.

"It has nothing whatever to do with me," replied Miss Pinkerton. At this there was a smothered exclamation from behind the window curtain, and the visitor manifested a somewhat increased interest in the pattern on her plate.

"I am very sorry," she continued, "to be obliged to witness this most distressing domestic scene, but your unhappy wife has my most sincere sympathy."

"Whatever do you mean?"

Miss Pinkerton's only reply was a sigh of almost greater volume than her hostess's. Then she made a suggestion.

"Perhaps I had better leave you together for a few minutes."

"Perhaps so," said Jack with some cordiality.

"Oh, please stay!" The voice from the window had more alarm in it than tearfulness. And Miss Pinkerton, who had shown no signs of going, merely replied, "Very well," and closed her lips with an air of martyrdom.

When women choose silence as an offensive force, they select their weakest weapon. Again Jack's knowledge of the sex stood him in good stead, and he went on stolidly with his breakfast.

It was Grace who broke the silence, with her face still averted.

"It's about a letter," she said.

"Read it!" exclaimed Miss Pinkerton.

A piece of paper slowly fluttered to the ground, and in a choking voice came the words:—

"I—I can't."

"Then I must." Miss Pinkerton picked up the paper, and stood confronting Jack with the air of a tragedy queen. She noted with some disappointment that her victim was to all intents and purposes quite calm. She had pictured his face turning to a greenish hue, but on the contrary it was quite bright and animated.

"Your wife opened one of your letters by accident," she began, unblushingly, "and these are the wicked words which shattered her idol and dispelled all the dreams of her youth."

Miss Pinkerton uttered the last words nervously, and came to a full stop where she had only intended a comma. Perhaps she was going a little too far. Of course it was a joke, but her spitefulness had rather run away with her, and she began to dread the consequences. The only satisfaction she had anticipated lay in watching the discomfiture and ultimate disgust of her victim, developing possibly into a real domestic squabble, but, at all events, in the preliminary symptoms she was disappointed; in fact, Jack was actually lighting a cigarette. He looked up as she stopped, and said:—

"As it's my letter, I suppose I may hear the contents. Go on, please."

Miss Pinkerton then read the letter, with a dramatic earnestness very much in contrast with the feminine levity of the writer.

"My darling Jack—(pause),—What



an age since we last met! It makes such a difference to me your being so far away. I miss you terribly. Now I want to see you particularly about all sorts of arrangements for the summer—(pause and sniff). So, if you can tear yourself away from the partner of your joys and sorrows, who will, I daresay, manage to exist without you for a bit,

I should like you to come and lunch with me to-morrow (Wednesday) at 1.30. If you come I am prepared to overlook your comparative neglect of me since your marriage. If you don't—beware!—Yours ever——' I suppose I need not read the name in your wife's presence, Mr. Henshaw?" concluded Miss Pinkerton, and then she gave something like a gasp.

For the effect of the letter on Jack had been marvellous. His cigarette was discarded. His callous smile had changed to a sickening look of shame. When he stood up he actually shook, and his lips apparently framed words, though for some time no sound came from them. At last he spoke, but his voice was hollow and scarcely recognisable.

"No, it is not necessary to read the name," he said with a shiver.

He walked slowly over to the window with drooping head.

Grace had turned to him with a look of wonder and alarm, which deepened as he spoke.

"Upon my honour, Grace," he said, "I cannot understand this. I assure you I have given this—this girl no encouragement that could induce her to write a letter like that after my marriage."

"IT HAS NOTHING WHATEVER TO DO WITH ME," SAID MISS PINKERTON.



His wife had dropped the flimsy mask that she had worn none too well, and confronted him with a pale face. She could find, however, nothing to say, except to repeat his last words.

"After your marriage, what do you mean?"

Jack, with an idiotic attempt at jocularly, jingled some money in his pocket, and feebly laughed.

"Well, of course, you know that a man isn't answerable to his wife for his pre-nuptial flirtations."

"Flirtations!" gasped Mrs. Jack. "Is this, then, one of your miserable flirtations that you are telling me about?" The question was put with much scorn and in a manner that said plainly that a reply would be superfluous. Jack attempted none.

"Stop!" she said suddenly. Jack tried to look as if he had been interrupted in the middle of a sentence. "We were engaged for over a year. Am I to understand that this—this *flirtation* was going on during that time?"

Her husband hung his head guiltily.

"It was scarcely a flirtation," he replied; "we were friends—just friends. We didn't meet till after I was engaged to you." He turned and looked out of the window with the air of one who speculates on what might have been.

Mrs. Henshaw's self-control and scorn were breaking down under the awful weight of her discovery. Her voice trembled a little as she asked him:—

"Why did I not hear of it—this friendship of yours? Oh! why didn't you tell me, Jack, and I would have given you your release before it was too late?" Then, with a sudden access of pardonable fury, and forgetting the part she had been playing:—

"Who is she? What's her name?"

Jack turned from the window with a look of astonishment, and muttered disjointedly:—

"Her name! Why, surely! The

letter! Miss Pinkerton read it! By George, though, she didn't read the name!" Then, with the eyes of both women upon him, a look of horrified enlightenment suddenly came into his face.

"Great Jupiter, her name! Do you hear? Tell me her name at once! Which one was it?"

There was complete silence for the space of ten seconds. Jack Henshaw counted them by the clock. Then Mrs. Henshaw rushed out of the room in tears. Jack turned to Miss Pinkerton, who had remained silent throughout and now looked really frightened.

"What will she do?" he asked excitedly.

"She would probably go to her mother," she said in some alarm, "unless——"

But Jack did not wait for the alternative.

"That's what I feared! It's the more exasperating because it will bring your visit to such a sudden conclusion. Of course you understand. If my sister were here it would be different. I suppose Grace will go at once. I'll fetch a cab!" And before she could stop him he was at the front door blowing excited double blasts on a cab whistle.

Then he summoned a maid.

"Miss Pinkerton finds she has to leave us suddenly. Will you please help her to pack?"

Before the astonished spinster could find breath to reply, she was bundled out of the room with more haste than dignity.

Jack rushed up to his wife's room, three steps at a time. A very tearful "Come in" answered his knock, and in a very few moments Jack Henshaw had dismissed the idea that he was the injured person, and was fully convinced that he was the hardest hearted scoundrel living.

His conduct was quite unjustifiable, but he could at least palliate it.

"You see, I knew you were having me," he explained, rather lamely. "I also knew, or rather guessed, that the letter was from Kate Tracey. Everything I said was, therefore, true as gospel. I *did* meet her after we were engaged; you introduced me yourself. We *were* great friends. We still are. Was she not your bridesmaid? No, I did not say I had flirted with her!"

His wife was smiling now, so he continued:—

"I was beastly severe, I know, but I couldn't think what you were driving at. You know my old *penchant* for amateur acting. I saw the possibility of the situation and couldn't resist it. And dear Miss Pinkerton——"

"Ah! Where is she? I had quite forgotten her. It was her mad idea. A great scheme for making you ridiculous. Ridiculous, indeed!"

"That reminds me," said her husband, going to the door. "Dear Miss Pinkerton thought she would leave us. In fact, her cab's at the door now. No—don't trouble. I'll see her out, and tell her you are too upset. I want to have a last word with her, as I don't expect we shall see her here again. The atmosphere is too dramatic for her dairy-fed constitution."

Miss Pinkerton, for the first time in her life, looking really "sheepish," was in the hall, and the cab was at the door.

Jack handed her in politely, and took the keenest interest in the arrangement of her luggage.

"I am so sorry you have to leave so soon," he said, "but I quite sympathise with your feelings. By-the-bye, there was an empty envelope in Kate Tracey's hand-writing on my plate this morning. Do you happen to know——"

But the cab had started.

## AUBADE

By KEMLO WATSON

MY lady dear,  
 The morn is here;  
 The stars have fled the skies;  
 The flaming sun  
 Hath caused them run,  
 To hide their dazzled eyes.  
  
 Now to the air  
 The dews repair,  
 Which, late, the earth did borrow;  
 And small birds now,  
 On every bough,  
 Do give their loves good-morrow.  
  
 Now full awake,  
 From every brake,  
 The watchful flowers are peeping;  
 Then rise, my sweet!  
 It is not meet  
 The fairest should be sleeping.



## THE IDLERS' CLUB

By ROBERT BARR

The Saturday-to-Monday habit is one that *There and Back.* should be encouraged. A man becomes provincial if he stays too much in London. He begins to think London is the whole thing, whereas it isn't. Quite a number of interesting events are happening continually outside of London. It brightens the mind to get away from one's own baliwick. I estimate that my mind is at least half an inch broader each Monday morning when I take a week-end trip. If it were not for the narrowing influence of London during the other six days, I think I should be the broadest-minded man at present in the world; but, alas! this expansion of mind is usually accompanied by contraction of body. I have frequently been jammed into a Saturday compartment with six on each side and two standing on my toes. I do hate the Saturday jam. I wish railway companies were run on the "Alice in Wonderland" principle—jam yesterday, jam to-morrow, but never jam to-day. I regret to say that on my week-end excursions I generally get the jam to-day. It is strange that railway companies are so slow to learn that big dividends arise through treating patrons generously.

Here is a story told me "Tickets, by the man who saw the *please!*" incident. The late Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone, in his sprightly days, sprang from a first-class carriage at a country station and attempted to rush the wicket. The ticket-taker, who did not recognise the statesman, saw in this tempestuous haste an attempt to evade the legal and just fare—such evasion being always

rightly censured by the magistrate when the case comes before him—grasped the flying tail of the Premier's coat, brought him up, as the vulgar say, with a round turn, crying sternly: "Come, now, none of that! I want your ticket, if you please."

Gladstone turned upon him a fierce and indignant face, that would have quelled anyone under the rank of a ticket-taker, but he said no words—merely dangled a little gold medal that hung at his watch-chain, whereupon the abashed ticket-taker apologised abjectly, and let go the august coat-tail, and the celebrity resumed his headlong career.

"And what," said I to the storyteller, "was the potency of the little gold medal? If I dangled my watch-chain at a ticket-taker, would he let me go through?"

"Not so," replied my friend. "That medal was a railway director's badge, and entitled the wearer to travel first class on any railway line in the kingdom."

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If directors wear such ornaments nowadays, I *A* suggest it would be a *Railway Experiment.* good thing to pass a law that they may be compelled to travel third class instead of first. Then we common people would perhaps get a little more comfort. Of course, there is nothing original about this suggestion; it is merely a variation of the statement of fifty years ago—that if directors were compelled to ride in front of the engines we would have fewer railway accidents. I think I shall devote the next dividend THE IDLER pays to buying a railway line for experimental purposes. I should cater almost entirely for the man in the street, and

let dukes and millionaires take pot-luck with us, on the principle that if you look after the pence the pounds will take care of themselves. When you remember that there is implanted in every man a desire to go somewhere if he can do it cheaply and comfortably, it seems to me that here is an unworked gold mine before which Klondike turns green instead of yellow. I would make it possible for the London man to spend a happy day on the shores of Lake Windermere, or listen to what the wild waves were saying along the coast of Arran. *Au contraire*, as they say in France, the Glasgow man might bang his sixpence in London.

"But he can do that now," says the railway director, if so great a man condescends to argue with me.

"Certainly," I reply, "he can buy a first-class ticket between London and Glasgow for a hundred and ten shillings and threepence, and five shillings each way for a sleeping car brings up the cost to six pounds, which many of us do not earn in a week, and many of those who do are not worth the salary. But I am talking of accomplishing this tour in the Highlands business at the cost of a Saturday-to-Monday, London-to-Folkestone."

At this point the justly indignant director would probably say it could not be done, and advise the cobbler to stick to his last.

Then I would reply, gently but firmly:—

"Sir, whose golden medal is hanging down your front, I have done it. I have proven the thing feasible in a land where railway men get higher wages, where engines are more expensive, where coal is dearer, where grades are heavier, and where railway carriages are much more luxurious and therefore more costly than in this country. Once upon a time, long, long ago, a club to which I belonged desired to take its

wife and family and spend the anniversary of its birth at the justly celebrated Niagara Falls. Now the Niagara Falls were three hundred miles or so distant, and they manifested the same reluctance toward approaching us that a mountain exhibited to Mahomet when he desired that hill to visit him. So if we were to see Niagara Falls, we were compelled to follow Mahomet's example and go to them. We therefore applied to a railway company for transportation rates, and were told that we might go there and back for one fare and a third. We said we'd sooner walk than pay such an exorbitant rate. The single fare was twenty-seven shillings, which made the tickets for return thirty-six shillings, according to the terms offered us. The railway man appeared to imagine this was very liberal, and asked us what we would regard as a fair price. We replied that if he took us safely to the Cataract and back for ten shillings we would be content to look on that sum as reasonable. The official regarded this suggestion as preposterous, but expressed a great desire that we should have the pleasure of seeing the Falls, and so said he would take the matter under consideration, and allow us his very best terms.

At our next meeting the proposal made by the railway official was as follows:—If we were con-

tent to be hauled by a goods engine and travel at goods train speed, taking carriages that were comfortable but not of the newest make, he would give us a train of six carriages and one goods engine for so much, with a certain price for each additional carriage. The train would belong to us from Saturday evening till Monday morning. We were to do all the advertising necessary and sell the tickets, paying the lump sum in cash before the train started. Our committee retired to consider the



proposal. At first it seemed rather a formidable risk to take, but the J. P. Morgan of the board pointed out that there was no risk at all beyond the price of a few advertisements in the daily papers. If the public did not bite, then we would not take the train; if they did, then we would have the money in hand to pay for it. It was figured out that if each passenger paid six shillings, and if we could get a certain number of them to book in advance, we could do the trick. If the public did not respond we need not negotiate for the train. The advertisements were got out on the true Encyclopædia Britannica plan years before the *Times* ever thought of the scheme. It was, "Hurry up, for heaven's sake! Now is your only chance to see the Niagara Falls for six shillings, there and back. Eight hours at the Falls! Be quick, or you'll be too late!" The response was immediate and overwhelming. We found that a great many travellers were anxious to pay something extra and secure a sleeping berth for the two nights, so we opened communication with the railway company, and as a result secured half-a-dozen old sleeping cars. The extra price for a berth for two nights was only six shillings. We had an immense train drawn by two engines, and the journey was accomplished at slow speed and in considerable comfort. At the last we had to refuse hundreds of applications, and we might have run several trains if we had wanted to, or the railway company would have permitted us. When accounts were squared up we had paid all expenses and had thirty or forty pounds profit.

Now this sort of thing could be quite well done in England, it seems to me. The railway lines of this country run through the most thickly populated land in the world, and the only question is—do the

people desire to travel? I think they do. The literary critic of that excellent weekly magazine-journal, *To-Day*—which, I am pleased to see has attained a deserved success—wrote as follows a short time ago:—

"I think every true Briton is at heart a rover. In his blood there is a restlessness, a divine discontent with his immediate surroundings, which owes its origin, maybe, to that Viking strain which runs through the whole race. Be he ever so tied down to one spot by business, by family cares, even by old age, your true Briton will still be unable to stifle the longing for travel that is implanted in his heart. His thoughts will turn eastward or westward, to the north or to the south, and once the opportunity presents itself, and he is free to seize it, he will cast aside the bonds that bind him to his own fireside, and go a-roaming with a light heart and an easy conscience, as his forefathers did before him, a wanderer and an adventurer on the face of the earth."

We did the Niagara Falls at a shilling per hundred miles. Let us see how this would work out in England, taking London as the starting-point. Glasgow is four hundred miles distant, and the return journey would be eight hundred miles; therefore the Saturday-to-Monday, or the Friday-to-Tuesday return ticket to Glasgow should be eight shillings. At the same rate, Plymouth would come to five shillings; Penzance to six and sixpence; Tenby, five and sixpence; Carnarvon, five shillings; Ilfracombe, four and sixpence; Cromer, three shillings; Windermere, five and sixpence. In all cases I have generously given the railway company the benefit of the odd pence. Any portion of the picturesque Lake regions should be done for under seven shillings, and any part of Cornwall for the same money. All districts of

Wales should be accessible to the week-end for about six shillings. The only trains that would need to travel at all fast would be those to Scotland. If the Glasgow train left at six o'clock in the evening, and arrived at Glasgow at nine in the morning, it would need to travel nearly twenty-seven miles an hour; but every day people are fined for doing that on their motor cars. Starting at six, and arriving at eight, the Plymouth train would have to run at seventeen miles an hour.

An all-night sit-up is *Third-Class* not a very cheering prospect to many of us, even with such a lovely, dreamy, poetical city as Glasgow is at the other end of the journey. So there should be provided plain but comfortable sleeping cars, for which the charge for the round trip should not be more than, say, six shillings. The present rate in luxurious sleeping cars is five shillings a night in addition to first-class fare. Now, I think it likely that the traffic would pay at the prices I have mentioned. Many railway companies in the west of America put on emigrant sleepers, for which, I believe, no charge is made in excess of the emigrant fare. I believe that the Canadian-Pacific Railway run colonist sleepers at a very moderate charge. I have never ridden in any of these cars, but as everything the Canadian-Pacific Railway does is excellently done, I am sure their colonist sleepers leave little fault to be found with them. There is no doubt in my mind that the railway in England which first puts on a third-class sleeping car will have a very large patronage even at ordinary five shilling extra fares. I make no doubt that the railway managers will at once adopt my week-end long excursions scheme, and we may expect next summer to see eight shilling trains leaving for Glasgow and Edinburgh every Friday and Saturday night, returning Monday morning and Tuesday morning.

Now that's settled, the *Furnished Apartments* next question is what to do with our week-end man when we get him there. The apartments with attendance plan is, so far as I know, confined to the British Isles. It used to be practised to some extent in Canada, but I should be at a loss to find a parlour and bedroom with attendance which includes the cooking of meals, the provisions of which you have yourself collected, in any of the countries of Europe, or in the United States. In those countries one is limited to boarding houses or hotels. The furnished apartment with attendance is a very good idea. It enables one to reside in privacy, and have what he likes to eat at practically market price. Cynical people have alleged that the landladies take a discount off either the price or the provisions, but if they do, it is not a very serious deduction, so all in all I consider the system as nearly perfect as things can be in this delusive world, so we will let it go at that. A little more than a year ago I said that when I found a good hotel, I would mention its name in these columns. The patient reader will have noticed that not more than two or three have been named. My experience with the British hotel is that it is always dear, and generally bad. I do not know any place on these islands where you could find such an hotel as, for instance, the Hotel de l'Europe in Rheims, where you can get a quiet and comfortable room, excellent coffee in the morning with delicious rolls and butter, a lunch that is better than some of the so-called first-class hotels in London will give you, together with as much white or red wine as you care to drink, a superb dinner of many courses equal to what you would get at the best restaurants in Paris, also with red or white wine *ad libitum*, and all this, including attendance for five shillings and fivepence a day. I stopped at a country town in England last week, and was charged four shillings



for a bedroom smaller than the one I had at Rheims, together with one and sixpence attendance, which was a penny more than it cost me for board and lodging a day and a night in a town of similar size in France.

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If this should chance to  
*Hotels.* meet the eye of some inn-keeper who can read and write, will he kindly send me a post-card and tell me why this is so? Apparently such a state of things did not exist in the good old days, if we are to believe that imaginative class of person—the historical novelist. The inns of the olden days were delightful places. I always love to read about an old inn when perusing an historical novel. “The Castle Inn,” by Stanley Weyman, is the kind of work I mean. Stephen Crane, in “The O’Ruddy,” which will be found on other pages of this magazine, shows the inn at Bristol to have been rather a lively corner. However, none of these gentlemen tell us anything about the size of the bill presented to travellers in those days. My remembrance of most books of this kind shows a picture of the lavish guest flinging what gold he has in his pocket to the landlord, who bows to the ground while the visitor springs on his horse and goes dashing away. I think this is the most unsatisfactory method of settling a hotel bill, but the heroes of historical novels always have a generous

contempt for detail, and so apparently never wish to see the items. I suspect this is the cause that hotel-keepers of the present day are so exacting. I wish some principal in a historical novel would call for his bill, and go over it item by item for us, so that we might know how much he had to shell out.

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Still, now that I re-  
member the fact, I am by  
*An* way of being an historical  
*Ancient* novelist myself, therefore  
*Inn.* I may set my brethren a  
good example. Here is a description of an inn in Shakespeare’s time, and the writer, not being a novelist, condescends to come down to figures. I eliminate the antique spelling.

“Those towns that they call thoroughfares have great and sumptuous inns builded in them for the receiving of such travellers and strangers as pass to and fro. Our inns are very well furnished, each comer is sure to lie in clean sheets, wherein no man has been lodged since they came from the laundry, or out of the water wherein they were last washed. If the traveller have a horse, his bed doth cost him nothing, but if he go on foot, he is sure to pay a penny for the same.”

That seems reasonable enough, but nowadays if we come up to an inn with a motor car, they expect more than a penny for the bed.







"WHOA, ALEXANDER! WHOA!"



ALSICA. A HEAP OF BALLISTA STONES IN THE NORTH-WEST ANGLE TURRET.

## A CITY OF ROMANCE

By EDWARD TEBBUTT

*Illustrated by Photographs of the Roman Wall*

"YOU will pardon me," I remarked, pleasantly, "but visitors are earnestly requested not to damage the pre-historic masonry."

The girl with the mallet started guiltily, and the eyes that encountered mine—deep violet eyes they were, too—gleamed with sudden indignation. Long experience prompts me to observe that women usually wax indignant when they should be contrite.

"Are you the owner of the Roman Wall?" she inquired, coldly.

"Only in a purely theoretical sense," I assured her; "I have, so to speak, been brought up on it, and, as an old friend, I feel compelled to protest, when

I see young ladies chipping off fragments on a more or less wholesale scale."

She rose from her knees, and I was relieved to notice that she was an unusually pretty girl. I liked the tilt of her sailor hat over a wealth of rebellious brown hair; and her white summer dress looked most ravishingly out of place amongst the hoary ruins of this old Roman city of Cilurnum.

"Besides," I added, by way of further admonition, "what would poor old Hadrian say? He scarcely built his Wall and his camps across Northumberland in order to provide the twentieth century with geological relics."

"You are abominably impertinent!"





THE FO-SE AT LIMESTONE BANK.

flashed the girl, with emphasis ; "you have not the slightest right to speak to me at all."

Candour compelled me to admit the impeachment. But I managed to qualify my apology. I said : "I merely wished to point out that the stone you are so laboriously hammering is not a Roman remain, but quite a modern variety."

She looked annoyed at first ; then laughed outright.

"How absurd," she breathed, and conceded ruefully, "I suppose it is a sort of judgment on me for my attempted vandalism."

"It certainly looks like it," I answered, judicially ; "but if you want a relic very badly, I will ask you to accept a Roman coin bearing the imposing head of the Emperor Severus. You needn't mind taking it. We dig them up in hundreds between Newcastle and

Carlisle. The small boys of Northumberland play pitch and toss with them."

"Does the Wall run all that distance?" queried the girl, irrelevantly ; "I thought it was only to be seen in the centre of the county, here."

"Two thousand years ago," I replied, in my most informative manner, "it extended from the estuary of the river Tyne to the Solway Firth. Seventy-three-and-a-half-miles of it, with twenty-three permanent camps established on its route, and nearly sixty mile-castles or watch towers. The Wall was eighteen feet high, and eight feet thick. Lying to the south, at an average distance of three hundred yards from the main fabric, stood a tremendous earthen barrier, called the Vallum. A great military highway was fashioned between the Wall and the Vallum, and was thus efficiently protected on either side.

"The fortification was designed by



STREET OF ROMAN BARRACKS, CILURNUM.

Emperor Hadrian in the year A.D. 119, was garrisoned by fifteen thousand Roman soldiers, and was, presumably, intended to keep the Picts and Scots away from the encampments in Southern Britain. It was abandoned in A.D. 446, and since that time has been given over to ruin and decay.

"You may imagine that this little dissertation is the outcome of abstruse historical research on my part. But it is nothing of the kind. It is simply 'Bruce's Handbook.'"

"I am very much obliged," smiled my companion; "I am staying with my father at Gilsland Spa, and I cycled over here because I particularly wanted to see Cilurnum before we return to London. I scarcely imagined, though, that I should be fortunate enough to meet such a Nestor of information."

"The good fortune is solely mine," I

assured her, "if I can be of any further service, 'Bruce's Handbook' is at your entire disposal."

"Tell me something about Cilurnum," she said; and she sat down daintily on the stub of the Western Gateway.

The spot, you will understand, is a particularly charming one. Cilurnum is the most interesting of all the Roman cities that lie dead and desolate amidst the wild, romantic scenery of the beautiful county of Northumberland. The Great Wall stands as high as your shoulders, and skirting the ruined camp, it's *chevaux-de-frise* a clustering crown of grass and wild flowers, it goes crawling grimly away, up hillsides, down sheer valleys, like the indomitable old barricade that it was in the days of the Roman conquest. Straight as a die; hard as iron; as loth to crumble as a bar of welded steel. The Vallum is





ROMAN MILESTONE, VINDOLANE.

flattened now ; the Military Highway is almost lost to sight. The immense fosse that once glinted on the northern fringe is filled in by time and is as dry as a bone. But the Wall stands, the Camps remain, and Cilurnum, or the Chesters, by the village of Bardon Mill, is a razed and tumbled city peopled by the ghosts of the Asturian cohorts and dedicated eternally to the mysterious past of two thousand years ago.

All this, and more, I explained dramatically to my entranced companion, with the intent to induce a state of mind fitting and proper for a minute exploration of the camp of dust and ashes. Mind you, the term exploration is used advisedly. For the houses and public buildings are five feet high foundations, and the streets are less than the merest skeletons. And from every nook and cranny grow grass and nettles ; a pall

of it, green and sorrowful, so that the great stones look blacker and grimmer than ever—imperishable monuments to the gigantic industry of a scattered, aspiring people.

"Cilurnum," I proceeded, "was the fifth station on the line of the Great Wall, and was occupied by the Asturian legions. Properly speaking, the Asturians were not Romans at all, but mere Spaniards. That, however, is a detail. Indications show that on several occasions the Picts and Scots were successful in driving their enemy from the city, though in each case they were ejected again by the Roman reinforcements which travelled along the Military Highway from an adjoining station. So I think we may take it for granted that the Asturians had a particularly tough time of it."

"And it was on this very spot that



A MILE-CASTLE, NEAR CRAG LOUGH.

they lived and fought and died—two thousand years ago!” My facts were evidently going home. That girl did not come to the Great Wall for nothing.

“Exactly!” I murmured, “they and their sons and their sons’ sons. They won the land at the point of the sword, and they split it in halves by means of the gigantic barrier whose shadow you see before you. They built this fallen city—and it and the others are the gravestones of their empire.”

She drew a swift, deep breath, and glanced around her at the hills, the trees, the sweeping, glinting pasture land. Her eyes rested on the Wall, and wandered over the great blocks of stone that were piled one above another or were heaped carelessly where the hand of time had tossed them. Perhaps she was thinking of the fifteen thousand soldiers who fought in the midst of implacable warfare on the north and

incessant rebellion on the south. . . . A chain of them, flung over a hostile country, living like men and dying like Romans. Perhaps she thought of their barbaric civilisation, their wild religions, their strong and lawless loves. One does not need a surfeit of history to realise these things on the line of Hadrian’s Wall.

“You are sitting now in the West Gateway,” I told her. “Cilurnum had six gates; most of the camps had only four. There were two main streets, one running through the centre of the city from east to west, and the other from north to south. Labyrinths of tiny alleys crept from each, wherein stood the houses of the soldiery and the camp followers. These causeways were scarcely the width of an arm’s-span, as you may see here and there by the outlines which still remain. The houses themselves, raised a few feet above the





A ROMAN MILE-CASTLE.

ground surface by pillar supports, had stone masonry for their foundations, with their upper storeys constructed of wood. The window sashes contained tiny squares of coarse glass, and hot-water pipes were threaded beneath the lower floors. All these interesting facts have been gleaned by the industrious antiquaries who have grovelled and laboured and quarrelled amongst these legacies from the far-away centuries."

Her violet eyes had grown more beautiful than ever with dreamy, retrospective shadows. She clasped her hands; for the mallet had fallen unheeded away. Her lips were parted, just so slightly as to suggest rather than display her dainty white teeth. She was staring beyond me, beyond the Wall and city, back into the centuries when England was not.

"Our imaginations shall play us a game," I said, softly; "I am the

Emperor Severus, and you—— Well, I scarcely can tell whom Severus loved best of all. I am back again from the North, we will say, for the Picts have been driven away to their gloomy mountain fastnesses. I ride in empiric power through the gateway here, my chariot wheels biting into the ruts which still mark the threshold stones. Before me and behind troop the Asturian cohorts, their armour bruised and battered, their spear-hilts shivered, their quivers empty of arrows. The city streets are thronged with maids and children, and in the guard-house stand beardless boys and seared old warriors, their uplifted swords glinting coldly in the sunshine. Do you hear the shouting as I pass into Cilurnum? Do you see the wreathes they fling before my feet, fashioned from the leaves and boughs which the maids have torn from the forest out yonder?

"My soldiers disperse, rushing this way and that through the seething congeries lying tortuously within the city maze. But I ride on to the Forum, where the priests and the magistrates await me; and back to the great stone Temple, its altars raised to the Good Mothers or to Mithras, the Sun-god of Persia. Here we worship, to pay tribute to our faith, and spill the blood of the prisoners beneath the idols of our fathers. A pæan of triumph rises to the sky—for I, the Emperor Severus, have come again to the Wall and the waiting people.

"Before the night has fallen, at the moment when rioting soldiers are blazing the city with torches, and joy is giving place to wilder revelry, I come alone on foot to the hillside villa, where you are awaiting me. The hills to the south are grey with shadows; the noise of the multitude is only a distant echo. Within the ramparts I hear the clanging tread of the sentinels, and the

hoarse challenge of the officer of the guard. The Military Highway is deserted; the gates are shut. And I——"

The girl had risen swiftly to her feet, a deeper colour waving beneath the tan of her cheeks. She was smiling never so slightly, and all the retrospection had vanished from her eyes.

"I must say good-bye," she interrupted somewhat stiffly. "I am awfully obliged to you for your interesting information; but it is getting late, and I must hurry back to Gilsland."

Her tone scarcely seemed to invite further familiarities. We shook hands gloomily, and I watched her lithe, white figure until she was lost to sight in the dip of a sheening valley. Then I picked up her mallet, which I had had the foresight to kick beneath a stone.

"To-morrow," I murmured to myself, "common honesty will compel me to restore this forgotten property to its owner at Gilsland Spa!"

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## THE CALL OF THE WILD

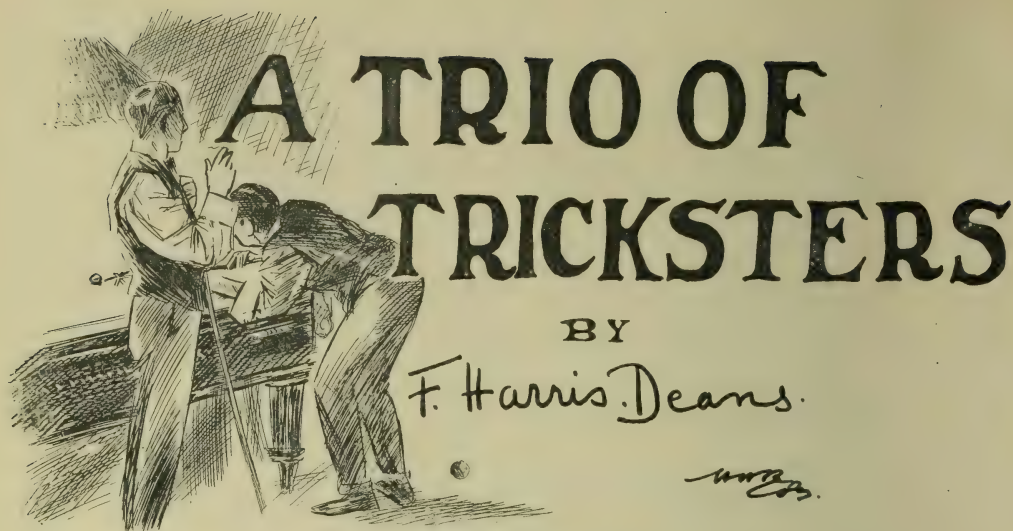
By GILBERT CANNAN

OH! the sea doth roar like a strong man bound,  
And the sea exacts reply;  
For the sea swears dearth 'gainst his foe the earth,  
And men stand gaping by.

For the sea is a god. In the souls of men  
There lurks a big desire  
For the sea in wroth and the lapping froth,  
And they worship the god in ire.

When the pine-trees roar and the forest cracks,  
The sea-god calls to his child.  
Whom the god loves most, he seeks the coast,  
To answer the call of the wild.





*Illustrated by A. Hope Reid*

**M**R. JAMES HARDON was a mild-looking young man, with light sandy hair carefully parted down the centre of his head. That he looked milder and younger than he really was may or may not have been his fault. It certainly was not his misfortune.

He had arrived two days previously at the little town of Kingsmere, to recuperate after a very fatiguing winter season.

Quite what his occupation was very few people knew. He occasionally backed horses—to lose; knew a few card tricks, with which he amused strangers; and a good many more which he neither showed to them or *amused* them with. He was a fairly good pigeon shot, and an exceptionally clever billiard player.

Kingsmere had been recommended to him by his bosom friend Samuel Dugger, who was a native of the place. Although Mr. Dugger had informed him that there was a good many pigeons there, he had not brought his gun.

On this particular afternoon, he was gazing mildly at the "Freemason's Hotel," debating whether he should enter or not. After a few minutes'

cogitation he sauntered in, and made for the billiard-room.

Calling for a Scotch and soda, he lit a cigarette, and stood watching a pale-faced, lanky individual awkwardly knocking the balls about on the table.

"Do you play?" queried that gentleman, catching Mr. Hardon's interested look.

"You can hardly call it playing," he replied, hesitatingly. Seeing he made a fairly comfortable living with his billiards, this was perhaps a fact. "Besides, I'm awfully out of practice."

"So'm I," confessed the young man. "I was just knocking the balls about to see if I remembered the game."

Mr. Hardon winked at his Scotch with his off eye.

"Well, I don't mind trying my hand," he murmured.

"Right!" cried the young man, briskly. "What shall it be—fifty up?"

"Fifty up? Oh, that means we've got to try and make fifty points, doesn't it?"

"Yes," said the young man, chalking the tip of his cue industriously. "The man who makes fifty first wins."

"I see. Which ball do I have? I've almost forgotten."

With exemplary patience, the young man explained the game to him—very well for a tyro.

After twenty minutes' play, when the game stood 10—12, the young man carelessly suggested having a bit on.

"Well, I'm not a gambler," stated Mr. Hardon, "but I don't mind half-a-sovereign."

At the end of an hour's play, Mr. Hardon raced out a winner by 50—46; and it is doubtful if he would have won then, had not the pale-faced young man sent his last two balls on the ground.

"Let's have another game?" suggested the loser, paying over his half-sovereign.

"Don't forget they close at twelve,"



"DO YOU PLAY?" QUERIED THE LANKY INDIVIDUAL."

"Go ahead, then. It's your play."

Now, whether it was that he was not used to the table, or that he took pity on the ignorance of his opponent, is uncertain, but for the next half-an-hour Mr. Hardon played about as badly as he ever had in his life.

"Playing ping-pong?" enquired a gentleman who had entered whilst the game was in progress, after the two innocents had sent their balls on the floor half-a-dozen times.

offensively remarked the gentleman who had been watching the game.

"I don't mind," answered Mr. Hardon, ignoring this individual. "Same stakes?"

"Let's have a decent bit on this time, seeing we're about level. What do you say to a fiver?"

"Go ahead, then," said Mr. Hardon.

As the young man went round the table to pick up his ball, he twitched his left eyelid at the gentleman who had been watching the game.



"See here," exclaimed that person, who, by his greasy appearance, seemed to be a butcher, addressing Mr. Hardon, "you're both pretty bad players, but I rather fancy the other chap is a bit better than you."

"You do, do you?" answered Mr. Hardon, blandly.

"Yes. And look here: in spite of your winning the last game, I'm ready to back him."

"Let me see," reflected Mr. Hardon. "I won the last game on a strange table. What'll you back him for?" he asked suddenly.

"Same as the stakes—a fiver."

"Done with you!" said Mr. Hardon, picking up his cue and marching to the table.

The pale young man and his backer exchanged knowing glances.

"Go it!" cried the former, as his opponent bent over the table.

And Mr. Hardon did "go it," to the extent of making a beautiful little break of twenty-two.

"Well, I'm ——!" exclaimed the young man, as he looked from Mr. Hardon to the nasty position in which the balls were placed.

"Here! what do you call this?" blustered the greasy gentleman.

"Billiards," said Mr. Hardon, mildly. "What did *you* think it was—ping-pong?"

"Shut up, Barker!" said the young man, irritably. "You put me out."

Gritting his teeth, he surveyed the table darkly. The balls were too badly placed for him to make more than ten.

Muttering viciously, he gave place to Mr. Hardon, and watched that gentleman while he handled the balls as if they were alive. Playing with rare skill, he put together an admirable eighteen.

"I seem to have improved, don't I?" he remarked, with a child-like smile. "I suppose I'm getting used to the table."

The young man scowled as he brushed Mr. Hardon on one side, and fumbled with his cue preparatory to making a stroke.

Temper often makes people do things which they afterwards regret, and no doubt the young man subsequently regretted his score of two.

"Never mind," said Mr. Hardon, encouragingly, as his opponent marked his score. "You're improving too, you know. You haven't sent your ball off the table once this game."

The landlord entered the room at this moment, and stood watching the game.

"Knows how to play," he observed to the butcher, as Mr. Hardon made the winning stroke.

"Knows a bit too much for his health," was the irritable reply.

"Knows a bit too much for Tom, at any rate," said the landlord, glancing at the scoring-board.

Mr. Barker made no reply; he was thinking deeply—in fact, so deeply, that it required several nudges from Mr. Hardon to bring to his mind the fact that he owed him five pounds.

Taking a greasy note from his pocket, he handed it over with a scowl.

"I made *that* by the sweat o' me brow, not by cheating," he remarked.

"Ah!" said Mr. Hardon, surveying the note amusedly. "Very interesting. Now suppose you give me one made by the Bank of England?"

Mr. Barker, swallowing with difficulty something in his throat, took the note and exchanged it for another.

"Now are you satisfied?" he growled.

"Quite," said Mr. Hardon, blandly.

For a while he stood talking billiards with the landlord, whilst Mr. Barker and the lanky young man discussed the condition of affairs in a savage undertone.

"Say," said the lanky youth, suddenly addressing Mr. Hardon; "because you whacked me, don't think you can play, you know."

"Great Scot! no," replied Mr. Hardon, scornfully.

"Because," continued the young man,

## A TRIO OF TRICKSTERS

controlling himself with an effort, "we've got much better players down here."

"I don't doubt it," said Mr. Hardon, cordially.

"Delighted," was the reply.

"Well then, I'll bet you an even fifty that we produce a local man the day after to-morrow to smash you up."



"'I WIN,' HE MUTTERED, APPARENTLY TO HIMSELF."

Pushing his agitated companion into a chair, Mr. Barker came forward.

"What d'y'e say to backing yourself for a hundred up with one of our local men?" he inquired.

"Done! He must be a *bona fide* yokel—I beg pardon, I mean local—however."

Being reassured on this point, Mr. Hardon left the room with the firm



conviction that, as a holiday resort, Kingsmere wanted some beating.

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At the duly appointed hour Mr. Hardon entered the crowded billiard room of the "Freemason's Hotel." His entry had the effect of silencing the babble of voices. There was a dead silence as he walked over to the corner where his friends, the butcher and the lanky young man, were. "Two to one on the Cockney," cried a voice.

The jeering laugh which followed this remark warned Mr. Hardon that some deep game was afoot.

"This is our man," said the butcher, waving his hand in an introductory manner towards a gentleman sitting near.

Though in his opponent Mr. Hardon saw his bosom friend Mr. Samuel Dugger, he made no sign of recognition.

"Is this gentleman a native of the place?" he inquired.

A chorus of triumphant voices quickly vouched for this.

As soon as it was seen that Mr. Hardon was resolved to play the match out, a tired looking stranger announced it as his firm conviction that he would win. Immediately he was surrounded by a throng of excited betting men, who expressed their disbelief in this statement at five to four against.

While the tired looking stranger—waking up slightly—was busy making entries in his note-book, Mr. Hardon,

who was standing by his opponent's side was seized with the spirit of prophecy.

"I win!" he muttered apparently to himself.

"Halves," sighed Mr. Dugger into his half-empty glass.

The ensuing game is remembered by the sporting inhabitants of Kingsmere to this day.

From the first stroke it was a neck and neck race; and when, the score standing at ninety-six all, Mr. Dugger, in a moment of great excitement, missed his stroke, even his backers murmured nothing but words of sympathy.

Mr. Hardon, with a white face, chalked his cue carefully; as, however, with a tricky ball he cannoned and went off the white, a muffled groan went round the room.

"My game, I think," he said, with a smile.

On leaving the hotel, he met Mr. Dugger outside.

"Hullo," was that gentleman's greeting, "thought it was you when they wired me."

"What did they offer you?"

"Twenty for a win, five for a lose. I brought Johnnie down to make a book in case it was you."

"Sixty-five pounds," said Johnnie, coming up at that moment.

"Add on *your* fifty pounds," calculated Mr. Dugger.

"*And* the fiver," put in Mr. Hardon. "Not bad, eh?"

# THE FAT



# CURLY ONE.

By George C. Magnus.

*Illustrated by Wilmot Lunt*

"D O endeavour to be sensible, Mr. Graham!" said Miss Muriel O'Connell severely. "If it's only for a few minutes it will be good practice for you," she added, opening wide her fan.

I sighed audibly. Miss Muriel's fan is nothing more or less than a feather screen, behind which she takes a cruel delight in hiding upon the flimsiest excuse. Three whole precious minutes having been wasted——

"All right, I'll try. Please remove the partition."

The feathers slowly disclosed two laughing blue eyes.

"Listen, Mr. Graham."

The first dreamy bars of the "Blue Danube" floated into the conservatory. I said to myself—well, something unworthy of repetition. I said aloud: "Now, I suppose, I must take you back?"

A dimple appeared—such a kissable dimple.

"You do look unhappy!"

"I look what I feel," said I. "I've only seen you twice during the last ten minutes, I shan't see you again probably for a week, and now I have to hand you over to some chap who won't appreciate you. I mean, who really wouldn't miss—that is to say——"

"Begin all over again," Miss Muriel suggested, encouragingly.

"Well, you know who *is* 'sensible,' don't you know. I say, can't you give him the slip?"

She gazed at me thoughtfully for a full minute. It was awfully jolly. Miss Muriel has the sweetest eyes in the world.

"I consider you a sad tempter," she remarked, abruptly.

"That's the nicest thing you've said this evening."

She took my word for it, and smiled demurely. I took her programme to make the necessary corrections. Then it was I discovered with bitter chagrin, the scrawling initials of one, Adolphus Spooner, affixed to the dance I had appropriated. Spooner is, without exception, the worst waltzer and the biggest ass I know. I recalled my last observation. Miss Muriel laughed. Then a silence fell between us. I divided my attention impartially between gazing at my companion, who seemed to be deriving unlimited pleasure from dissecting a fragment of palm, and my patent-leather shoes. At last her selfish preoccupation irritated me beyond endurance.

"I have a book on botany at home," I began, reproachfully.



"You *are* rude!" she exclaimed, flushing; but thank goodness she threw away what remained of the leaf. A few minutes later, a brilliant idea seized me. I fancy it owed its origin to Miss Muriel's late plaything, for brilliant ideas and I are, unhappily, on scarcely visiting terms.

"Are you a believer in palmistry?"

My companion turned on the settee and regarded me coldly.

"I beg your pardon; did you by any chance speak?"

"By a happy chance, I did," and I repeated the question.

"What do you know about it, Mr. Graham?"

I knew that in order to correctly read Miss Muriel's palm it would be necessary to hold her hand in mine. Miss Muriel's hand is just made for this treatment.

"Everything worth knowing," I answered, truthfully.

"I have never had my hand read," she remarked, indifferently; "but I know girls who have. Those who have been told nice things, believe in it fervently."

"Surely you have no fear of joining the unbelievers, Miss O'Connell? Come, allow me to convert you."

"I don't believe you know anything about it," she said, suspiciously.

"You admit, however, that the proof of the pudding——"

"How is it you have never mentioned——"

"I thought you would ask! You see, I have a weakness for hiding my light under——"

"A microscope!" she suggested.

"After that, I will say no more. I'm sorry I——"

But, to my joy, Miss Muriel began to unbutton her glove. I surreptitiously removed both of mine, and offered her assistance, with, I am afraid, a sad absence of tact.

"Of course they are not! I always wear sixes."

I apologised. At the same moment my companion succeeded in hopelessly

splitting her glove. I determined there should be no lack of tact this time.

"Is your shoe hurting you, Mr. Graham?"

"It's all right now, thank you," I answered, slowly rising from my stooping position.

Miss Muriel put out her hand an inch at a time.

"I'm not a schoolmaster," I hastened to assure her.

The hand came a wee bit nearer. I seized it firmly with my left, and covered it with my right.

"Is there any necessity——" she began, indignantly.

"It's absolutely essential," said I, with unruffled serenity.

Miss Muriel's scorn was very complete. "How absurd! You can't see my palm."

Being forced to admit the truth of this statement, I reluctantly uncovered the hand, and, in order to collect my thoughts, gazed long and fixedly at the little pink lines. I found them very fascinating.

"Well?" inquired Miss Muriel, impatiently. "Well?"

I began to trace the lines with the tip of my finger, inwardly praying that it was the right thing to do. Miss Muriel laughed most provokingly. I looked at her sternly.

"I—I can't help it," she cried. "You tickle me so!"

"Ah! I see. I will be more careful in future. You have a very pretty—I mean, a very well-balanced hand, Miss O'Connell. I note you are honest, upright, clear-headed, temperate——"

"You are converting me very rapidly."

"I was going to tell you a lot more nice things. Now you have put them completely out of my head." Miss Muriel sighed deeply. "I observe that you never tell a tarradiddle—if you can help it. . . . You will be pleased to hear that you are not likely to steal anything—save the hearts of mere men. . . . This dear little twirly line round the thumb



"'HOW DARE YOU SAY SUCH A THING!' SHE CRIED."



denotes that your temper is even ; when roused, hasty and soon over ; when fully roused—well, I think I had better get on with the fate line. A rather uncertain fate is shown, but it will turn out all right, provided you do a certain thing. Next we come to the heart line—— Did you speak ? ”

“ Merely smiled.”

“ It was a very audible smile,” said I, severely. “ The heart line shows up very strong. You have a very large heart, Miss O’Connell.”

“ I must see a doctor about it.”

“ I should advise a specialist. To continue, it is clear that you prefer giving it away in dribblets to a large army of hungry admirers, rather than——”

“ Pray don’t stop. I should never have believed you could be so entertaining.”

“ Please don’t interrupt—rather than giving it wholly to one. Further, it is shown that the possessor of this much coveted little hand is not above carrying on a flirtation——”

“ What girl is, Mr. Graham ? ” pleaded Miss Muriel.

“ Wait ! ” said I, sternly. “ Not above carrying on a flirtation with a man——”

“ No, no, not with a man,” she cried in horror.

“ With a man who loves her,” I concluded.

Miss Muriel snatched away her hand, and sprang to her feet.

“ How dare you say such a thing ! ” she cried, her blue eyes flashing. “ I shall return to the ball room. I prefer dancing with Mr. Spooner to——”

“ Have some pity ! ” I implored. “ I’m sure you wouldn’t have me tell you things that were not——”

“ Which line told you that I—that, well, what you just dared to say ? ”

“ If you will come a little closer, I will have much pleasure——”

“ No ; point it out on your own.”

I opened my hand and studied it for a long time.

“ I don’t appear to possess the line in question,” I said at last.

“ I can well understand your surprise,” she retorted. “ Judging from the length of your search, you certainly expected to find it.”

“ I always try to oblige a lady,” I murmured, feebly.

As I spoke, a sudden idea seemed to seize her, for she smiled and sat down again. I lost no time in following her good example. A slight pause ensued.

“ Suppose you let me read *your* hand,” she said, abruptly.

“ I—I beg your pardon ! Why, you don’t know anything about it ! ”

“ Give me your hand.”

“ I wish you would give me yours.”

Miss Muriel ignored my want, and with fine scorn exclaimed : “ You are afraid ! ”

Whereupon I held out my hand. Miss Muriel took it very carefully—not covering it, or anything of that sort—and then, well—then I just set my teeth.

“ I will start with the heart line, as that seems the most highly developed,” she began in business-like tones. “ I note you possess an enlarged heart. I further observe that affection for the fair sex *en masse* is the cause. It appears that you cannot resist any girl that smiles on you. . . . I regret to see that your heart is also incapable both of giving and retaining affection for longer than an ordinary holiday. You *must* have change. It is perhaps due to your impressionableness that you have such a failing for proposing, almost at sight.”

She paused for breath, and, dabbing my brow with my handkerchief, I seized the opportunity to inquire :—

“ To which line do I owe all this, please ? ”

“ This fat curly one,” she answered, calmly.

“ Thanks. I must see if I can’t have it altered.”

“ I don’t see what difference that will make to your—heart,” she observed.

"I didn't say I wanted to alter *my* heart," I said, stiffly. "If the things you have been saying were true——"

"You imply that they are not true?"

"I imply nothing——"

"It sounded suspiciously like it, Mr. Graham."

"I *say* that they are untrue! I have only loved one girl in my life, and I have only proposed once in my life."

"Oh, Mr. Graham!"

"You said once that our eyes could never lie. Look into my eyes."

Miss Muriel drew hastily away from me, and opened her objectionable fan.

"What reason have you for doubting my statement—for saying 'Oh!' like that?" I asked, rather cleverly gaining possession of my enemy.

"I will tell you. Didn't you propose to Miss Matthews——"

"That girl!"

"The very same day you honoured me with——"

"Before or after?" I inquired, with interest.

"You would know that best," she answered, frigidly.

"Undoubtedly! And that girl told you this—and you believed it?"

"She didn't exactly tell me, but she——"

"Insinuated it?"

"I understood that such was the case."

"Ah! these *dear* girls. Would you mind—my asking whether she accepted the 'honour'? I'm sure you will pardon my inquisitiveness on this point."

My companion, ignoring my anxious question, pulled her wrap over her beautiful shoulders. Then she rose, tugging



"SHE TURNED UPON HER HEEL."

on her long glove—the split one—with feverish haste.

"I am engaged to Sir Robert for this



next dance," she said, somewhat irrelevantly. "I should be sorry to miss it."

"I'm sure you would," said I, from the settee.

"Am I to return to the ballroom alone?"

"You are not going to return at all until you have answered three questions," I said, quietly.

"Indeed! Who is to prevent me, pray?" she asked, haughtily.

I got up from the settee with a coolness entirely assumed.

"You!" With an amused little laugh, and without another word, she turned upon her heel. I took a quick step after her, and caught her round the waist.

"Mr. Graham, how dare you! Release me this moment!"

"Not until you have answered my questions."

She hit me in the face, and struggled with all her strength; but I got my arms round her, and drew her to me. And there I held her, all panting, her face crimson, her blue eyes blazing.

"Now, tell me—do you still believe that cruel lie? Good God! if a man had uttered it! . . . When you refused me, you gave me some hope. Has what that girl told you made you treat me like you have been treating me—like an overgrown schoolboy, who doesn't know his own mind? Lastly, do you care for Sir Robert? You shall tell me! I can't go on like this. I must know whether there is any chance for me now. Oh! Muriel, if you only know how I worship you! Tell me—tell me, once and for all, can you love me in return? And if you don't—if you can't—I swear by all I hold dear never to cross your path again!"

Then I released her, but—she did not leave me. She was trembling from head to foot. Was it with anger? or—I raised her face, now strangely pale, and made her meet my eyes. I held them. I looked into her very soul, and as I looked, a mad exultant throb coursed through my being.

"Muriel," I whispered. "Muriel, my sweetheart, my queen!"

"Oh, Dick, I never dreamt you loved me like this!"

I took the darling up in my arms, and kissed her soft, half-parted lips.

A little later we were seated behind the palms again. But how different was the grouping!

"Do you think he will mind very much?"

"He ought to, by Jove! But don't think about such people as Sir Robert; let's think of nothing but our own sweet selves."

"Oh, indeed! A little time back I thought you anything but sweet."

"Yes, you were—'roused,' weren't you?"

"Roused? I could have eaten you!"

"So could I have you."

"You did surprise me."

"Yes, I expect I did—now I come to think of it."

"And, d'you know, you rather frightened me."

"To tell you the truth, I rather frightened myself."

"You did look so fierce when you seized hold of me."

"Poor little girl!"

"I—I rather liked it, really," she said, softly.

"So did I," I whispered back. "Truly!"

"I certainly misread your character; I never thought you could look fierce, or be so masterful. I always thought—"

"Yes, I know what you thought," I interposed with some haste.

"Well, you thought some really horrid things about me, you know."

"Palmistry is a science—" I began, carefully.

"Fiddlesticks!" cried Miss Muriel, rudely. "Do you think them now?"

"No, darling. I should read your lines differently now. And you? What about my fat curly one?"

There was a pause.

"I am glad I misread the fat curly one."

"Why?" I asked, drawing her closer to me.

"Because—can't you guess?" she answered, shyly. "No, not another!"

# THE O'RUDDY

By STEPHEN CRANE and ROBERT BARR

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.—The O'Ruddy, acting on his father's dying instructions, sets out from Glendore to place certain papers in the hands of the Earl of Westport. Arrived at Bristol, he overhears a conversation in which his father is insulted, and a duel follows, the result being the wounding of his opponent, Colonel Royale, a friend of the Earl and of his son, Lord Strepp. On his return to the inn after the duel, The O'Ruddy discovers that his papers have been stolen, and at once suspects a Mr. Forister, whom he had kicked out of the door on the previous evening. He starts for Bath in pursuit, and on the road encounters Jem Bottles, a highwayman, to whom he administers a severe drubbing, and who agrees to assist him in his chase. Forister is caught by Paddy, the faithful, if somewhat wild, follower of The O'Ruddy, but it turns out that he is not the culprit, and O'Ruddy returns to Bristol. Next morning he is summoned to the bedroom of the Earl of Westport, who has arrived from London, and a stormy interview ensues, the Earl declaring that whatever papers The O'Ruddy has are worthless. O'Ruddy then accuses the Earl, in the presence of his daughter, the Lady Mary, of stealing the papers himself.

## VI.

A T first I thought that my speech had given the aged Earl a stroke. He writhed on his bed, and something appeared at his lips which was like froth. His lovely daughter sprang to him with a cry of fear and woe. But he was not dying; he was only mad with rage.

"How dare you? How dare you?" he gasped. "You whelp of Satan!"

"Tis me that would not be fearing to dare anything," I rejoined calmly. "I would not so. I came here with a mind for fair words, but you have met me with insult and something worse. We cannot talk the thing. We must act it. The papers are yours, but you took them from me unfairly. You may destroy them. Otherwise I will have them back and discover what turned you into a great rogue near the end of your days."

"Hearken!" screamed the Earl. "Hearken! He threatens." The door into the parlour flew open, and Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale appeared on the threshold, their faces blank with wonder.

"Father," cried the young lord, stepping hastily forward, "whatever is wrong?"

"That!" screamed the Earl, pointing a palsied finger at me. "That! He comes here and threatens *me*,—a peer of England."

The Lady Mary spoke swiftly to her brother and the Colonel.

"'Tis a sick man's fancy," she said. "There have been no threats. Father has had a bad day. He is not himself. He talks wildly. He——"

"Mary!" yelled the Earl as well as he was able. "Do you betray me? Do you betray your own father? Oh, a woman Judas and my daughter!"

Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale looked as if their minds were coming apart. They stared at Lady Mary, at the Earl, at me. For my part I remained silent and stiff in a corner, keeping my eye upon the swords of the other gentlemen. I had no doubt but that presently I would be engaged in a desperate attempt to preserve my life. Lady Mary was weeping. She had never once glanced in my direction. But I was thrilling with happiness. She had flung me her feeble intercession even as a lady may fling a bun to a bear in a pit, but I had the remembrance to prize, to treasure, and if both gentlemen had set upon me and the sick Earl had advanced with the warming-pan I believe my new strength would have been able to beat them off.

In the meantime the Earl was screeching meaningless rubbish in which my name, with epithets, occurred constantly. Lady Mary, still weeping, was trying to calm him.

Young Lord Strepp at last seemed to



make up his mind. He approached me and remarked :—

"An inexplicable situation, Mr. O'Ruddy."

"More to me than to you," I repeated suavely.

"How?" he asked, with less consideration in his manner. "I know nought of this mummery."

"At least I know no more," I replied, still suave.

"How, Mr. O'Ruddy?" he asked, frowning. "I enter and find you wrangling with my father in his sick chamber. Is there to be no word for this?"

"I dare say you will get forty from your father; a hundred, it may be," said I, always pleasant. "But from me you will get none."

He reflected for a moment. "I dare say you understand I will brook no high-handed silence in a matter of this kind. I am accustomed to ask for the reasons for certain kinds of conduct, and of course I am somewhat prepared to see that the reasons are forthcoming."

"Well, in this case, my lord," said I with a smile, "you can accustom yourself to not getting a reason for a certain kind of conduct, because I do not intend to explain myself."

But at this moment our agreeable conversation was interrupted by the old Earl who began to bay at his son. "Arthur, Arthur, fling the rascal out; fling the rascal out! He is an impostor, a thief!" He began to fume and sputter, and threw his arms wildly; he was in some kind of convulsion; his pillows tossed, and suddenly a packet fell from under them to the floor. As all eyes wheeled toward it, I stooped swiftly and picked it up.

"My papers!" said I.

On their part there was a breathless moment of indecision. Then the swords of Lord Strepp and the Colonel came wildly from their scabbards. Mine was whipped out no less speedily, but I took it and flung it on the floor at their feet, the hilt towards them. "No," said I,

my hands empty save for the papers, "'tis only that I would be making a present to the fair Lady Mary, which I pray her to receive." With my best Irish bow I extended to the young lady the papers—my inheritance—which had caused her father so much foaming at the mouth.

She looked at me scornfully; she looked at her father, she looked at me pathetically, she looked at her father, she looked at me piteously; she took the papers.

I walked to the lowering and abashed points of the other men's swords, and picked my blade from the floor. I paid no heed to the glittering points which flashed near my eyes. I strode to the door; I turned and bowed. As I did so, I believe I saw something in Lady Mary's eyes which I wished to see there. I closed the door behind me.

But immediately there was a great clamour in the room I had left, and the door was thrown violently open again. Colonel Royale appeared in a high passion.

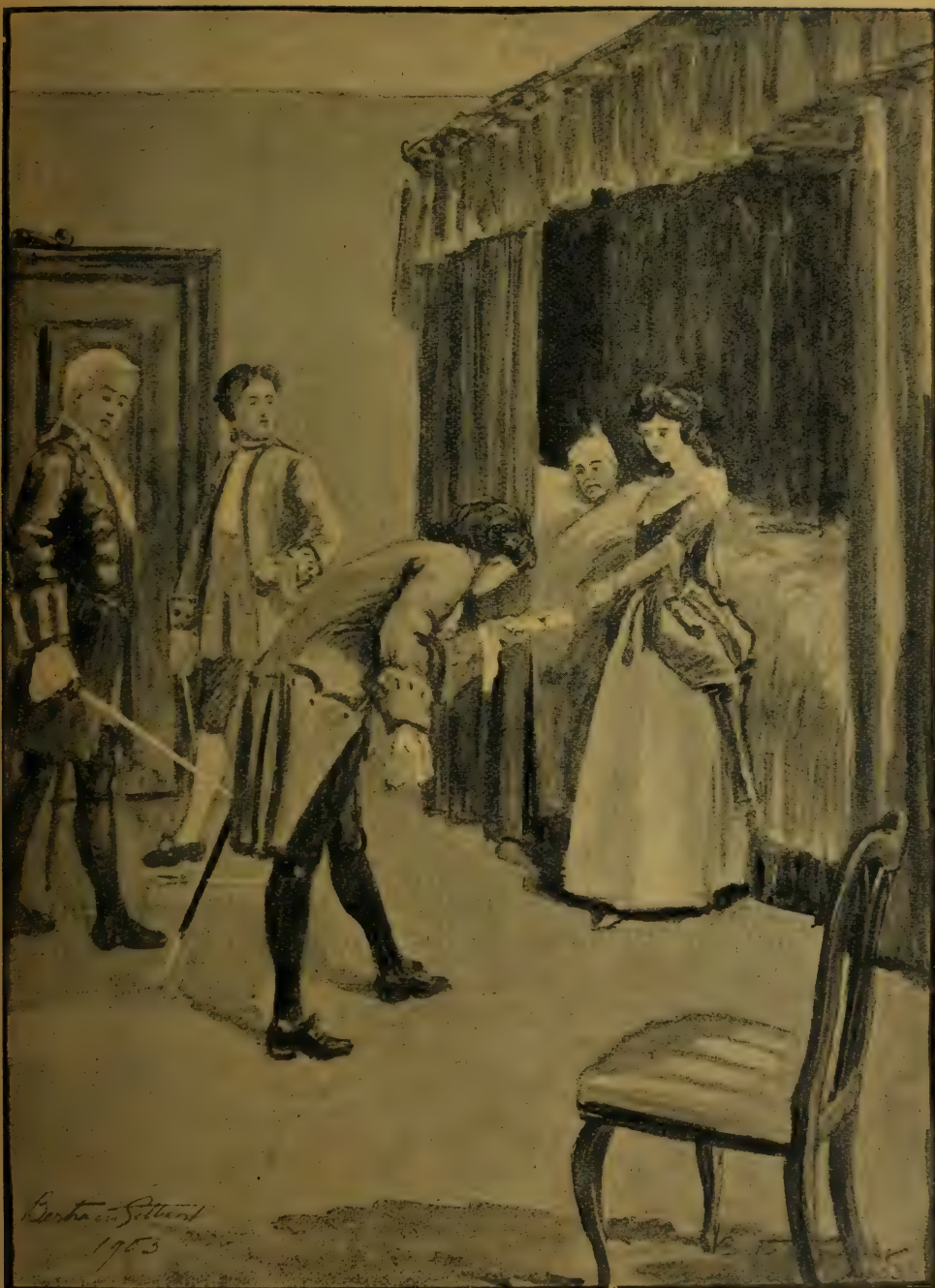
"No, no, O'Ruddy!" he shouted. "You are a gallant gentleman. I would stake my life that you are in the right. Say the word, and I will back you to the end against ten thousand fiends."

And after him came tempestuously young Lord Strepp, white on the lips with pure rage; but he spoke with a sudden steadiness.

"Colonel Royale, it appears," he said, "thinks he has to protect my friend The O'Ruddy from some wrong of my family or of mine?"

The Colonel drew in his breath for a dangerous reply, but I quickly broke in:—

"Come, come, gentlemen!" said I, sharply. "Are swords to flash between friends when there are so many scoundrels in the world to parry and pink? 'Tis wrong—'tis very wrong. Now, mark you, let us be men of peace, at least until to-morrow morning, when, by the way, I have to fight your friend Forister."



12 SHE LOOKED AT ME PATHETICALLY, SHE LOOKED AT HER FATHER, SHE LOOKED AT ME PITEOUSLY;  
SHE TOOK THE PAPERS."



"Forister!" they cried together.

Their jaws fell; their eyes bulged; they forgot everything; there was a silence.

"Well," said I, wishing to reassure them, "it may not be to-morrow morning. He only told me that he would kill me as soon as he came to Bristol, and I expect him to-night or in the morning. I would of course be expecting him to show here as quickly as possible after his grand speech; but he would not be entirely unwelcome, I am thinking, for I have a mind to see if the sword of an honest man, but no fighter, would be able to put this rogue to shame, and him with all his high talk about killing people who have never done a thing in life to him but kick him some number of feet out into the inn yard, and this need never to have happened if he had known enough to have kept his sense of humour to himself, which often happens in this world."

Reflectively, Colonel Royale murmured:—

"One of the finest swordsmen in England."

For this I cared nothing.

Reflectively, Lord Strepp murmured: "My father's partner in the shipping trade."

This last made me open my eyes. "Your father's partner in the shipping trade, Lord Strepp? That little black rascal!"

The young nobleman looked sheepish.

"Aye, I doubt not he may well be called a little black rascal, O'Ruddy," he answered; "but in fact he is my father's partner in certain large—fairly large, you know—shipping interests. Of course that is a matter of no consequence to me personally; but—I believe my father likes him, and my mother and my sister are quite fond of him, I think. I, myself, have never been able to quite—quite understand him in certain ways. He seems a trifle odd at moments. But he certainly is a friend of the family."

"Then," said I, "you will not be able

to have the felicity of seeing him kill me, Lord Strepp."

"On the contrary," he rejoined considerably, "I would regard it as usual if he asked me to accompany him to the scene of the fight."

His remark, incidentally, that his sister was fond of Forister, filled me with sudden insolent madness.

"I would hesitate to disturb any shipping trade," I said with dignity. "It is far from me to wish that the commerce of Great Britain should be hampered by sword-thrust of mine. If it would please young Lord Strepp, I could hand my apologies to Forister all tied up in blue silk ribbon."

But the youthful nobleman only looked at me long with a sad and reproachful gaze.

"O'Ruddy," he said mournfully, "I have seen you do two fine things. You have never seen me do anything. But, know you now, once and for all, that you may never quarrel with me."

This was too much for an Irish heart. I was moved to throw myself on this lad's neck. I wished to swear to him that I was a brother in blood, I wished to cut a vein to give him everlasting strength—but perhaps his sister Mary had something to do with this feeling.

Colonel Royale had been fidgeting. Now he said suddenly:—

"Strepp, I wronged you. Your pardon, Mr. O'Ruddy; but, damme, Strepp, if I didn't think you had gone wrong for the moment."

Lord Strepp took the offered hand. "You are a stupid old firebrain," he said affectionately to the Colonel.

"Well," said the Colonel jubilantly, "now everything is clear. If Mr. O'Ruddy will have me, I will go with him to meet this Forister; and you, Strepp, will accompany Forister; and we all will meet in a friendly way—ahem!"

"The situation is intimately involved," said Lord Strepp dejectedly. "It will be a ridiculous business—watching

each blade lunge toward the breast of a friend. I don't know that it is proper. Royale, let us set ourselves to part these duellists. It is indecent."

"Did you note the manner in which he kicked him out of the inn?" asked the Colonel. "Do you think a few soothing words would calm the mind of one of the finest swordsmen in England?"

I began to do some profound thinking.

"Look you, Colonel," said I. "Do you mean that this wretched little liar and coward is a fine swordsman?"

"I haven't heard what you call him," said the Colonel, "but his sword-play is regular firelight on the wall. However," he added hopefully, "we may find some way to keep him from killing you. I have seen some of the greatest swordsmen lose by chance to a novice. It is something like cards. And yet you are not an ignorant player. That, I, Clarence Royale, know full well. Let us try to beat him."

I remembered Forster's parting sentence. Could it be true that a man I had kicked with such enthusiasm and success was now about to take revenge by killing me? I was really disturbed. I was a very brave youth, but I had the most advanced ideas about being killed. On occasion of great danger I could easily and tranquilly develop a philosophy of avoidance and retirement. I had no antiquated notions about going out and getting myself killed through sheer bull-headed scorn of the other fellow's hurting me. My father had taught me this discretion. As a soldier he claimed that he had run away from nine battles; and he would have run away from more, he said, only that all the others had turned out to be victories for his side. He was admittedly a brave man, but, more than this, he had a great deal of sense. I was the child of my father. It did not seem to me profitable to be killed for the sake of a sentiment which seemed weak and dispensable. This little villain! Should I

allow him to gratify a furious revenge because I was afraid to take to my heels? I resolved to have the courage of my emotions. I would run away.

But of all this I said nothing. It passed through my mind like light and left me still smiling gaily at Colonel Royale's observations upon the situation.

"Wounds in the body from Forster," quoth he, academically, "are almost certain to be fatal, for his wrist has a magnificent twist which reminds one of a top. I do not know where he learned this wrist movement, but almost invariably it leads him to kill his man. Last year I saw him—I digress. I must look to it that O'Ruddy has quiet, rest, and peace of mind until the morning."

Yes; I would have great peace of mind until the morning! I saw that clearly.

"Well," said I, "at any rate we will know more to-morrow. A good day to you, Lord Strepp, and I hope your principal has no more harm come to him than I care to have come to me, which is precious little, and in which case the two of us will be little hurted."

"Good-bye, O'Ruddy," said the young man.

In the corridor the Colonel slapped my shoulder in a sudden exuberant outburst.

"O'Ruddy," he cried, "the chance of your life! Probably the best-known swordsman in all England! 'Pon my word, if you should even graze him, it would almost make you a peer. If you truly pinked him, you could marry a duchess. My eye, what an opportunity for a young and ambitious man."

"And what right has he to be such a fine swordsman?" I demanded fretfully. 'Tis no right of a little tadpole like him to be a great cut-throat. One could never have told from the look of him, and yet it simply teaches one to be always cautious with men."

The Colonel was bubbling over with



good nature, his mind full of the prospective event.

"I saw Ponsonby kill Stewart in their great fight several years ago," he cried, rubbing his hands; "but Ponsonby was no such swordsman as Forister, and I misdoubt me that Stewart was much better than you yourself."

Here was a cheerful butcher. I eyed him coldly.

"And out of this," said I, slowly, "comes a vast deal of entertainment for you, and a hole between two ribs for me. I think I need a drink."

"By all means, my boy," he answered, heartily. "Come to my chamber. A quart of port under your waistcoat will cure a certain bilious desire in you to see the worst of things, which I have detected lately in your manner. With grand sport before us, how could you be otherwise than jolly? Ha! ha!"

So saying, he affectionately took my arm and led me along the corridor.

## VII.

When I reached my own chamber I sank heavily into a chair. My brain was in a tumult. I had fallen in love and arranged to be killed in one short day's work. I stared at my image in a mirror. Could I be The O'Ruddy? Perhaps my name was Paddy or Jem Bottles? Could I pick myself out in a crowd? Could I establish my identification? I little knew.

At first I thought of my calm friend, who apparently drank blood for his breakfast. Colonel Royale to me was somewhat of a stranger, but his charming willingness to grind the bones of his friends in his teeth was now quite clear. I fight the best swordsman in England as an amusement—a show! I began to see reasons for returning to Ireland. It was doubtful if old Mickey Clancy would be able to take full care of my estate, even with the assistance and prevention of Father Donovan. All properties looked better while the real owner had his eye on them. It would be a shame

to waste the place at Glandore all for a bit of pride of staying in England. Never a man neglected his patrimony but that it didn't melt down to a kick in the breeches and much trouble in the courts. I perceived, in short, that my Irish lands were in danger. What could endanger them was not quite clear to my eye, but at any rate they must be saved. Moreover it was necessary to take quick measures. I started up from my chair, hastily re-counting Jem Bottle's five guineas.

But I bethought me of Lady Mary. She could hardly be my good fairy. She was rather too plump to be a fairy. She was not extremely plump, but when she walked something moved within her skirts. For my part I think little of fairies, who remind me of roasted fowl's wings. Give me the less brittle beauty which is not likely to break in a man's arms.

After all, I reflected, Mickey Clancy could take care quite well of that estate at Glandore; and, if he didn't, Father Donovan would soon bring him to trouble; and, if Father Donovan couldn't, why, the place was worth very little anyhow. Besides, 'tis a very weak man who couldn't throw an estate into the air for a pair of bright eyes.

Aye, and Lady Mary's bright eyes! That was one matter. And there was Forister's bright sword. That was another matter. But to my descendants I declare that my hesitation did not endure an instant. Forister might have an arm so supple and a sword so long that he might be able to touch the nape of his neck with his own point, but I was firm on English soil. I would meet him even if he were a *chevaux de frise*. Little it mattered to me. He might swing the ten arms of an Indian god; he might yell like a gale at sea; he might be more terrible in appearance than a volcano in its passions; still I would meet him.

There was a knock, and at my bidding a servant approached and said: "A

gentleman, Mr. Forister, wishes to see you, sir."

For a moment I was privately in a panic. Should I say that I was ill, and then send for a doctor to prove that I was not ill? Should I run straightway and hide under the bed? No!

"Bid the gentleman enter," said I to the servant.

Forister came in smiling, cool and deadly. "Good day to you, Mr. O'Ruddy," he said, showing me his little teeth. "I am glad to see that you are not for the moment consorting with highwaymen and other abandoned characters

who might succeed in corrupting your morals, Mr. O'Ruddy. I have decided to kill you, Mr. O'Ruddy. You may have heard that I am the finest swordsman in England, Mr. O'Ruddy?"

I replied calmly: "I have heard that you are the finest swordsman in England, Mr. Forister, whenever better swordsmen have been travelling in foreign parts, Mr. Forister, and when no visitors of fencing distinction have taken occasion to journey here, Mr. Forister."

This talk did not give him pleasure, evidently. He had entered with brave composure, but now he bit his lips and shot me a glance of hatred. "I only wished to announce," he said savagely, "that I would prefer to kill you in the morning as early as possible."

"And how may I render my small assistance to you, Mr. Forister? Have



"AND HERE I FIND -MR. FORISTER."

you come to request me to arise at an untimely hour?"

I was very placid; but it was not for him to be coming to my chamber with talk of killing me. Still, I thought that, inasmuch as he was there, I might do some good to myself by irritating him slightly. I continued:—

"I to-day informed my friends——"

"Your friends!" said he.

"My friends," said I. "Colonel Royale in this matter."

"Colonel Royale!" said he.

"Colonel Royale," said I. "And if you are bound to talk more, you had best thrust your head from the window and talk to those chimneys there, which will take far more interest in your speech than I can work up. I was telling you that to-day I informed my friends—then you interrupted me. Well,



I informed them—but what I informed them of you will not know very soon. I can promise you, however, it was not a thing you would care to hear with your hands tied behind you."

"Here's a cold man with a belly full of ice," said he, musingly. "I have wronged him. He has a tongue on him—he has that. And here I have been judging from his appearance that he was a mere common dolt. And what, Mr. O'Ruddy," he added, "were you pleased to say to the gentlemen which I would not care to hear with my hands tied behind me?"

"I told them why you took that sudden trip to Bath," I answered softly.

He fairly leapt in a sudden wild rage. "You—told them?" he stuttered. "You poltroon! 'Twas a coward's work!"

"Be easy," said I, to soothe him. "'Tis no more cowardly than it is for the best swordsman in England to be fighting the worst swordsman in Ireland over a matter in which he is entirely in the wrong, although 'tis not me that cares one way or another way. Indeed, I prefer you to be in the wrong, you little black pig!"

"Stop!" said he, with a face as white as milk. "You told them—you told them about—about the girl at Bath?"

"What girl at Bath?" said I, innocently. "'Tis not me to be knowing your wenches in Bath or otherwheres."

A red flush came into the side of his neck and swelled slowly across his cheeks. "If you've told them about Nell!"

"Nell?" said I. "Nell? Yes, that's the name. Nell—yes, Nell. And if I told them about Nell?"

"Then," he rejoined solemnly, "I shall kill you ten times if I lose my soul for it."

"But after I have killed you eleven times I shall go to Bath and have some sweet interviews with fair Nell," said I. This sting I expected to call forth a terrific outburst, but he remained scowling in dark thought. Then I saw where

I had been wrong. This Nell was now more a shame than a sweetheart, and he was afraid that word had been passed by me to the brother of— Here was a chance to disturb him. "When I was making my little joke of you and your flame at Bath," said I, thoughtfully, "I believe there were no ladies present. I don't remember quite. Anyhow, we will let that pass. 'Tis of no consequence."

And here I got him in full cry.

"Curse you!" he shrieked. His sword sprang and whistled in the air.

"Hold!" said I, as a man of peace. "'Twould be murder. My weapon is on the bed, and I am too lazy to go and fetch it. And in the meantime let me assure you that no word has crossed my lips in regard to Nell, your Bath sweetheart, for the very excellent reason that I never knew of her existence until you yourself told me some moments ago."

Never before had he met a man like me. I thought his under-jaw would drop on the floor.

"Up to a short time ago," said I, candidly, "your amours were safe from my knowledge. I can be in the way of putting myself as silent as a turtle when it comes to protecting a man from his folly with a woman. In fact, I am a gentleman."

He breathed heavily. "You are a fiend," he answered. Keeping his eyes on the floor, he deliberated upon his choice of conduct. Presently he sheathed his sword and turned with some of his old jauntiness towards the door. "Very good," said he. "To-morrow we shall know more of our own affairs."

"True," I replied.

"We shall learn if slyness and treachery are to be defeated by fair-going and honour."

"True," said I.

"We shall learn if a snake in the grass can with freedom bite the foot of a lion."

"True," said I.

There was a loud jovial clamour at the door, and at my cry it flew open. Colonel Royale entered precipitately, beaming with good humour.

"O'Ruddy, you rascal," he shouted, "I commanded you to take much rest, and here I find——" He halted abruptly as he perceived my other visitor. "And here I find," he repeated coldly, "here I find Mr. Forister."

Forister saluted with finished politeness. "My friend and I," he said, "were discussing the probabilities of my killing him in the morning.

He seems to think that he has some small chance for his life, but I have assured him that any real betting man would not wager a grain of sand that he would see the sun go down to-morrow."

"Even so," rejoined the Colonel imperturbably.

"And I also suggested to my friend," pursued Forister, "that to-morrow I would sacrifice my ruffles for him, although I always abominate having a man's life-blood about my wrists."

"Even so," quoth the undisturbed Colonel.

"And further I suggested to my friend that if he came to the ground



'THE DOOR IS WIDE ENOUGH FOR THE TWO OF YOU. TAKE IT TOGETHER. YOU WILL GO THROUGH LIKE GREASE.'

with a coffin on his back, it might promote expedition after the affair was over."

Colonel Royale turned away with a gesture of disgust.

I thought it was high time to play an ace at Forister and stop his babble, so I said:—

"And when Mr. Forister had finished his graceful remarks we had some talk regarding Mr. Forister's affairs in Bath, and I confess I was much interested in hearing about the young ——"

Here I stopped abruptly, as if I had been interrupted by Forister; but he had given me no sign but a sickly grin.



"Eh, Forister?" said I. "What's that?"

"I was remarking that I had nothing further to say for the present," he replied, with superb insolence. "For the time I am quite willing to be silent. I bid you a good day, sirs."

VIII.

As the door closed upon Forister, Colonel Royale beat his hand passionately against the wall. "O'Ruddy," he cried, "if you could severely maim that cold-blooded bully, I would be willing to adopt you as my legitimate grandfather. I would indeed."

"Never fear me," said I. "I shall pink him well."

"Aye," said my friend, looking at me mournfully, "I ever feared your Irish lightheartedness. 'Twill not do to be confident. He is an evil man, but a great swordsman. Now I never liked Ponsonby, and Stewart was the most lovable of men; but in the great duel Ponsonby killed——"

"No," I interrupted, "curse the duel between Ponsonby and Stewart. I'm sick of it. This is to be the duel between The O'Ruddy and Forister, and it won't be like the other."

"Eh, well," said the Colonel good-naturedly; "make your mind easy. But I hope to God you lay him flat."

"After I have finished with him," said I in measured tones, "he will be willing to sell himself as a sailor to go to the Indies; only, poor devil, he won't be able to walk, which is always a drawback after a hard fight, since it leaves one man incapable on the ground and thus discloses strong evidence of a struggle."

I could see that Colonel Royale had no admiration for my bragging air, but how otherwise was I to keep up my spirits? With all my discouragements it seemed to me that I was privileged to do a little fine lying. Had my father been in my place, he would have lied Forister into such a corner that the man

would be thinking that he had the devil for an opponent. My father knew more about such matters.

Still, I could not help but be thinking how misfortunate it was that I had kicked a great swordsman out of this inn at Bristol when he might have been a harmless shoemaker if I had only decent luck. I must make the best of it, and for this my only method was to talk loudly—to myself, if need be; to others if I could. I was not the kind that is quite unable to say a good word for itself even if I was not able to lie as well as my father in his prime. In his day he could lie the coat off a man's back, or the patches off a lady's cheek, and he could lie a good dog into howling ominously. Still, it was my duty to lie as well as I was able.

After a time Lord Strepp was announced, and entered. Both he and Colonel Royale immediately stiffened and decided not to perceive each other. "Sir," said Lord Strepp to me, "I have the honour to present my compliments to you, and to request that you join a friend of mine, Mr. Forister, at dawn to-morrow, in the settlement of a certain small misunderstanding."

"Sir," said I, in the same manner, "I am only too happy to have this little matter adjusted."

"And, of course, the arrangements, sir?"

"For them I may refer you to my friend Colonel Royale."

"Ah!" said the young Lord, as if he had never before seen the Colonel.

"I am at your service, sir," said Colonel Royale, as if he never in his whole life had heard of Lord Strepp.

Then these two began to salaam one another, and mouth out fool phrases, and cavort and prance and caracole, until I thought them mad. When they departed there was a dreadful scene. Each refused to go through the door before the other. There was a frightful deadlock. They each bowed and scraped and waved their hands, and surrendered

the doorway back and forth, until I thought they were to be in my chamber eternally. Lord Strepp gorgeously presented the right of way to Colonel Royale, and the Colonel gorgeously presented the right of way to Lord Strepp. All this time they were bending their backs at each other.

Finally I could stand it no longer. "In God's name," I shouted, "the door is wide enough for the two of you. Take it together. You will go through like grease. Never fear the door. 'Tis a good wide door."

To my surprise, they turned to glance at me, and burst into great laughter. Then they passed out amiably enough together. I was alone.

Well, the first thing I did was to think. I thought with all my force. I fancied the top of my skull was coming off. I thought myself into ten thousand intricacies. I thought myself into doom and out of it, and behind it and below it, but I could not think of anything which was of service to me. It seemed that I had come along a lot of mummings, and one of these mummings was resolved to kill me, although I had never even so much as broken his leg. But I remembered my father's word, who had told me that gentlemen should properly kill each other over a matter of one liking oranges and the other not liking oranges. It was the custom among men of position, he had said, and of course a way was not clear to changing this custom at the time. However, I determined that if I lived I would insist upon all these customs being moderated and re-directed. For my part, I was willing that any man should like oranges.

I decided that I must go for a walk. To sit and gloom in my room until the time of the great affair would do me no good in any case. In fact, it was likely to do me much harm. I went forth to the garden in the rear of the inn. Here spread a lawn more level than a ball-room floor. There was a summer-house and many beds of flowers. On this day

there was nobody abroad in the garden but an atrocious parrot, which, balancing on its stick, called out continually raucous cries in a foreign tongue.

I paced the lawn for a time, and then took a seat in the summer-house. I had been there but a moment, when I perceived Lady Mary and the Countess come into the garden. Through the leafy walls of the summer-house I watched them as they walked slowly to and fro on the grass. The mother had evidently a great deal to say to the daughter. She waved her arms and spoke with a keen excitement.

But did I overhear anything? I overheard nothing. From what I knew of the proper conduct of the really thrilling episodes of life, I judged that I should have been able to overhear almost every word of this conversation. Instead, I could only see the Countess making irritated speech to Lady Mary.

Moreover, it was legitimate that I should have been undetected in the summer-house. On the contrary, they were perfectly aware that there was somebody there, and so in their promenade they presented it with a distinguished isolation.

No old maid ever held her ears so wide open. But I could hear nothing but a murmur of angry argument from the Countess and a murmur of gentle objection from Lady Mary. I was in possession of an ideal place from which to overhear conversation. Almost every important conversation ever held had been overheard from a position of this kind. It seemed unfair that I, of all men in literature, should be denied this casual and usual privilege.

The Countess harangued in a low voice at great length. Lady Mary answered from time to time, admitting this and admitting that, protesting against the other. It seemed certain to me that talk related to Forister, although I had no real reason for thinking it; and I was extremely angry that the Countess of Westport and her daughter,



Lady Mary Strepp, should talk of Forister.

Upon my indignant meditations the parrot interpolated:—

"Ho! ho!" it cried hoarsely. "A pretty lady! A pretty lady! A pretty lady! A pretty lady! —"

Lady Mary smiled at this vacuous repetition, but her mother went into a great rage, opening her old jaws like a maddened horse. "Here, landlord! Here, waiter! Here, anybody!"

So people came running from the inn, and at their head was, truly enough, the landlord. "My lady," he cried panting.

She pointed an angry and terrible finger at the parrot. "When I walk in this garden, am I to be troubled with this wretched bird?"

The landlord almost bit the turf, while the servants from the inn grovelled near him. "My lady," he cried, "the bird shall be removed at once." He ran forward. The parrot was chained by its leg to a tall perch. As the innkeeper came away with the entire business, the parrot began to shout: "Old harridan! Old harridan! Old harridan!" The innkeeper seemed to me to be about to die of wild terror. It was a dreadful moment. One could not help but feel sorry for this poor wretch, whose sole offence was that he kept an inn and also chose to keep a parrot in his garden.

The Countess sailed grandly toward the door of the hotel. To the solemn protestations of six or seven servants she paid no heed. At the door she paused and turned for the intimate remark. "I cannot endure parrots," she said impressively. To this dictum the menials crouched.

The servants departed: the garden was now empty save for Lady Mary and me. She continued a pensive strolling. Now, I could see plainly that here fate had arranged for some kind of interview. The whole thing was set like a scene in a theatre. I was undoubtedly to emerge suddenly from the summer-house; the lovely maid would startle,

blush, cast down her eyes, turn away. Then, when it came to my turn, I would doff my hat to the earth and beg pardon for continuing a comparatively futile existence. Then she would slyly murmur a disclaimer of any ability to criticise my continuation of a comparatively futile existence, adding that she was but an inexperienced girl. The ice thus being broken, we would travel by easy stages into more intimate talk.

I looked down carefully at my apparel and flecked a handkerchief over it. I tilted my hat; I set my hip against my harbour. A moment of indecision, of weakness, and I was out of the summer-house. God knows how I hoped that Lady Mary would not run away.

But the moment she saw me she came swiftly to me. I almost lost my wits.

"'Tis the very gentleman I wished to see," she cried. She was blushing, it is true, but it was evident she intended to say nothing about inexperience or mere weak girls. "I wished to see you because—" She hesitated and then rapidly said: "It was about the papers. I wanted to thank you—I—you have no notion how happy the possession of the papers has made my father. It seemed to have given him new life. I—I saw you throw your sword on the floor with the hilt away from you. And—and then you gave me the papers. I knew you were a gallant gentleman."

All this time, I, in my confusion, was bobbing and murmuring pledges of service. But if I was confused, Lady Mary was soon cool enough in the presence of a simple bog-trotter like me. Her beautiful eyes looked at me reflectively.

"There is only one service I can render you, sir," said she, softly. "'Tis advice which would have been useful in saving some men's lives if only they had received it. I mean—don't fight with Forister in the morning." 'Tis certain death."



"A WOMAN'S MEDDLING OFTEN RESULTS IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THOSE SHE—THOSE SHE DON'T CARE  
TO HAVE KILLED."



It was now my turn once more. I drew myself up, and for the first time I looked squarely into her bright eyes:

"My lady," said I, with mournful dignity, "I was filled with pride when you said the good word to me. But what am I to think now? Am I, after all, such a poor stick that, to your mind, I could be advised to sell my honour for a mere fear of being killed?"

Even then I remembered my one-time decision to run away from the duel with Forister; but we will not be thinking of that now.

Tears came into Lady Mary's eyes.

"Ah! now I have blundered," she said. "'Tis what you would say, sir. 'Tis what you would do. I have only made matters worse. A woman's meddling often results in the destruction of those she—those she don't care to have killed."

One would think from the look of this last sentence that with certain reason I could have felt somewhat elated without being altogether a fool. Lady Mary meant nothing of importance by her speech, but it was a little bit for a man who was hungry to have her think of him. But here I was assailed by a very demon of jealousy and distrust. This beautiful witch had some plan in her head which did not concern my welfare at all. Why should she, a great lady, take any trouble for a poor devil who was living at an inn on money borrowed from a highwayman? I had been highly honoured by an indifferent consideration born of a wish to be polite to a man who had eased the mind of her father. No, I would not deceive myself.

But her tears! Were they marking indifferent consideration? For a second I lost myself in a roseate, impossible dream. I dreamed that she had spoken to me because she——

Oh, what folly! Even as I dreamed, she turned to me with splendid carriage, and remarked coldly:—

"I did not wish you to suppose that I

ever failed to pay a debt. I have paid this one. Proceed now, sir, in your glowing stupidity. I have done."

When I recovered myself she was placidly moving away from me toward the door of the inn.

## IX.

I had better be getting to the story of the duel. I have been hanging back with it long enough, and I shall tell it at once. I remember my father saying that the most aggravating creature in life was one who would be keeping back the best part of a story through mere reasons of trickery, although I have seen himself dawdle over a tale until his friends wished to hurl the decanters at him. However, there can be no doubting of the wisdom of my father's remark. Indeed, there can be little doubting of the wisdom of anything that my father said in life, for he was a very learned man. The fact that my father did not invariably defer to his own opinions does not alter the truth of those opinions in my judgment, since even the greatest of philosophers is more likely to be living a life based on the temper of his wife and the advice of his physician, than on the rules laid down in his books. Nor am I certain that my father was in a regular habit of delaying a story. I only remember this one incident, wherein he was recounting a stirring tale of a fight with a lancer, and just as the lance was within an inch of the paternal breast my father was reminded, by a sight of the walnuts, that Mickey Clancy was not serving the port with his usual rapidity, and so he addressed him. I remember the words well.

"Mickey, you spalpeen," said my father, "would you be leaving the gentlemen as dry as the bottom of Moses's feet when he crossed the Red Sea? Look at O'Mahoney there! He is as thirsty as a fish in the top of a tree. And Father Donovan has had but two small quarts, and he never takes

less than five. Bad luck to you, Mickey; if it was a drink for yourself, you would be moving faster. Are you wishing to ruin my reputation for hospitality, you rogue you?"

And my father was going on with Mickey, only that he looked about him at this time and discovered his guests upon their feet, one with the tongs and one with the poker, others with decanters ready to throw.

"What's this?" said he.

"The lance," said they.

"What lance?" said he.

"The lance of the lancer," said they.

"And why shouldn't he have a lance?" said my father. "'Faith, 'twould be an odd lancer without a lance!"

By this time they were so angry that Mickey, seeing how things were going, and I being a mere lad, took me from the room. I never heard precisely what happened to the lancer, but he must have had the worst of it, for wasn't my father, seated there at the table, telling the story long years after?

Well, as to my duel with Forister. Colonel Royale was an extremely busy man, and almost tired my life out with a quantity of needless attentions. For my part, I thought more of Lady Mary, and the fact that she considered me no more than if I had been a spud. Colonel Royale fluttered about me. I would have gruffly sent him away if it were not that everything he did was meant in kindness and generous feeling. I was already believing that he did not have more than one brain in his head, but I could not be ungrateful for his interest and enthusiasm in getting me

out to be hurt correctly. I understood; long years afterwards, that he and Lord Strepp were each so particular in the negotiations that no less than eighteen bottles of wine were consumed.

The morning for the duel dawned softly warm, softly wet, softly foggy. The Colonel popped into my room the moment I was dressed. To my surprise, he was now quite mournful. It was I, now, who had to do the cheering.

"Your spirits are low, Colonel?" said I banteringly.

"Aye, O'Ruddy," he answered with an effort, "I had a bad night, with the gout. Heaven help this devil from getting his sword into you."

He had made the appointment with Strepp, of course, and as we walked toward the ground he looked at me very curiously out of the ends of his eyes. "You know—ah, you have the honour of the acquaintance of Lady Mary Strepp, O'Ruddy?" said he suddenly and nervously.

"I have," I answered, stiffening. Then I said: "And you?"

"Her father and I were friends before



"'SINK YOUR SOUL,' HE CRIED."



either of you were born," he said simply. "I was a cornet in his old regiment. Little Lady Mary played at the knee of the poor young subaltern."

"Oh," said I meanly, "you are, then, a kind of uncle."

"Aye," said he, "a kind of uncle. So much of an uncle," he added with more energy, "that when she gave me this note I thought much of acting like a real uncle. From what I have unfortunately overheard, I suspect that the Earl—aw—disagrees with you on certain points."

He averted his face as he handed me the note, and eagerly I tore it open. It was unsigned. It contained but three words: "God spare you!" And so I marched in a tumult of joy to a duel wherein I was expected to be killed.

I glanced at the Colonel. His countenance was deeply mournful. "'Tis for few girls I would become a dove to carry notes between lovers," he said gloomily. "Hang you for it, O'Ruddy!"

"Nay, Colonel," said I. "'Tis no missive of love. Look you!"

But still he kept his eyes averted. "I judge it was not meant for my eyes," he said, still very gloomy.

But here I flamed up in wrath:—

"And would the eye of an angel be allowed to rest upon this paper, if it were not fit that it should be so?" I demanded in my anger. "Colonel, am I to hear you bleat about doves and lovers when a glance of your eye will disabuse you? Read!"

He read. "'God spare you!'" he repeated tenderly. Then he addressed me with fine candour. "Aye, I have watched her these many years, O'Ruddy. When she was a small girl I have seen her asleep with some trinket clasped in her rosy hand on the coverlet. Since she has been a beautiful young lady I have—but no matter. You come along, named nobody, hailing from nowhere; and she—she sends me out to deliver her prayer that God may spare you! Go in, O'Ruddy," he added heartily. "There is no truer man could

win her. As my lady says, 'God spare you!'"

"And if Forister's blade be not too brisk, I will manage to be spared," I rejoined.

"Oh! there is another thing touching the matter," said the Colonel, suddenly. "Forister is your chief rival, although I little know what has passed between them. Nothing important, I think, although I am sure Forister is resolved to have her for a bride. Of that I am certain. He is resolved."

"Is he so?" said I.

I was dumb and cold for a moment. Then I slowly began to boil, like a kettle freshly placed on the fire. So I was facing a rival? Well, and he would get such a facing as few men had received. And he was my rival, and in the breast of my coat I wore a note—"God spare you!" Ha! ha! He little knew the disadvantages under which he was to play. Could I lose with "God spare you!" against my heart? Not against three Foristers!

But hold! Might it not be that the gentle Lady Mary, deprecating this duel, and filled with feelings of humanity, had sent us each a note with this fervid cry for God to spare us? I was forced to concede it possible. After all, I perfectly well knew that to Lady Mary I was a mere nothing. Royale's words had been so many plumes in my life's helmet, but at bottom I knew better than to set great store by them. The whole thing was now to hurry to the duelling-ground and see if I could discover from this black Forister's face if he had received a "God spare you!" I took the Colonel's arm and fairly dragged him.

"Damme, O'Ruddy!" said he, puffing; "this can be naught but genuine eagerness."

When we came to the duelling-place, we found Lord Strepp and Forister pacing to and fro, while the top of a near-by wall was crowded with pleasant-minded spectators.

"Aye, you've come, have ye, sirs?" called out the rabble.

Lord Strepp seemed rather annoyed, and Colonel Royale grew red and stepped peremptorily toward the wall, but Forister and I had eyes only for each other. His eye for me was a glad, cruel eye. I have a dim remembrance of seeing the Colonel take his scabbard and incontinently beat many worthy citizens of Bristol. Indeed, he seemed to beat every worthy citizen of Bristol who had not legs enough to get away. I could hear them squeaking out protests while I keenly studied the jubilant Forister.

Aye, it was true. He, too, had a "God spare you!" I felt my blood begin to run hot. My eyes suddenly cleared, as if I had been empowered with miraculous vision. My arm became supple as a whip. I decided upon one thing. I would kill Forister.

I thought the Colonel never would give over chasing citizens, but at last he returned breathless, having scattered the populace over a wide stretch of country. The preliminaries were very simple. In a half-minute Forister and I, in our shirts, faced each other.

And now I passed into such a state of fury that I cannot find words to describe it; but, as I have said, I was possessed with a remarkable clearness of vision and strength of arm. These



"'TIS AT YOUR SERVICE, SIR."

*Robert G. Smith*  
1871

phenomena amaze me even at this day. I was so airy upon my feet that I might have been a spirit. I think great rages work thus upon some natures. Their competence is suddenly made manifold. They live, for a brief space, the life of giants. Rage is destruction active. Whenever anything in this world needs to be destroyed, nature makes somebody wrathful. Another thing that I recall is that I had not the slightest doubt of my ability to kill Forister. There were no more misgivings, no quakings. I thought of the impending duel with delight.

In all my midnight meditations upon the fight, I had pictured myself as lying strictly upon the defensive and seeking a chance opportunity to damage my redoubtable opponent. But the moment after our swords had crossed I was an absolute demon of attack. My very first lunge made him give back a long pace. I saw his confident face change to a look of fierce excitement.

There is little to say of the flying,



spinning blades. It is only necessary to remark that Forister dropped, almost immediately, to defensive tactics before an assault which was not only impetuous but exceedingly brilliant, if I may be allowed to say so. And I know that on my left, a certain Colonel Royale was steadily growing happier.

The end came with an almost ridiculous swiftness. The feeling of an ugly quivering wrench communicated itself from the point of my sword to my mind; I heard Strepp and Royale cry "Hold!" I saw Forister fall; I lowered my point and stood dizzily thinking. My sight was now blurred; my arm was weak.

My sword had gone deep into Forister's left shoulder, and the bones there had given that hideous feeling of a quivering wrench. He was not injured beyond repair, but he was in exquisite agony. Before they could reach him he turned over on his elbows and managed in some way to fling his sword at me. "Sink your soul!" he cried, and he gave a sort of howl as Lord Strepp, grim and unceremonious, bounced him over again upon his back. In the meantime Colonel Royale was helping me on with my coat and waistcoat, although I hardly knew that either he or the coat or waistcoat were in existence.

I had my usual inclination to go forward and explain to everybody how it all had happened. But Royale took me forcibly by the arm, and we turned our backs on Strepp and Forister and walked toward the inn.

As soon as we were out of their sight, Colonel Royale clasped my hands with rapture. "My boy," he cried, "you are great! You are renowned! You are illustrious! What a game you could give Ponsonby! You would give him such a stir!"

"Never doubt me," said I. "But I am now your legitimate grandfather, and I should be treated with great respect."

When we came near the inn I began

to glance up at the windows. I surely expected to see a face at one of them. Certainly she would care to know who was slain or who was hurt. She would be watching, I fondly hoped, to see who returned on his legs. But the front of the inn stared at us, chilly and vacant, like a prison wall.

When we entered, the Colonel bawled lustily for an immediate bottle of wine, and I joined him in its drinking, for I knew it would be a bellows to my flagging spirits. I had set my heart upon seeing a face at the window of the inn.

X.

And now I found out what it was to be a famous swordsman. All that day the inn seemed to hum with my name. I could not step down a corridor without seeing flocks of servants taking wing. They fled tumultuously. A silly maid coming from a chamber with a bucket, saw me and shrieked. She dropped her bucket and fled back into the chamber. A manservant saw me, gave a low moan of terror, and leaped down a convenient stairway. All attendants scuttled aside.

What was the matter with me? Had I grown in stature, or developed a ferocious ugliness? No; I now was a famous swordsman. That was all. I now was expected to try to grab the maids and kiss them wantonly. I now was expected to clout the grooms on their ears, if they so much as showed themselves in my sight. In fact, I was now a great blustering, overpowering, preposterous ass.

There was a crowd of people in the coffee-room, but the buzz of talk suddenly ceased as I entered.

"Is this your chair, sir?" said I, civilly, to a gentleman.

He stepped away from the chair as if it had tried to bite him.

"'Tis at your service, sir," he cried, hastily.

"No," said I, "I would not be taking it if it be yours, for there are just as good chairs in the sea as ever were caught,



"BOLTED LIKE A HARE."

and it would ill become me to deprive a gentleman of his chair, when by exercising a little energy I can gain one for myself, although I am willing to admit that I have a slight hunger upon me. 'Tis a fine morning, sir."

He had turned pale and was edging toward the door. "'Tis at your service, sir," he repeated in a low and frightened voice. All the people were staring at us.

"No, good sir," I remonstrated, stepping forward to explain. "I would not be having you think that I am unable to get a chair for myself, since I am above everything able and swift with my hands, and it is a small thing to get a chair for one's self and not deprive a worthy gentleman of his own."

"I did not think to deprive you, sir," he ejaculated desperately. "The chair is at your service, sir!"

"Plague the man!" I cried, stamping my foot impatiently; and at the stamping of my foot a waiter let fall a dish, some women screamed, three or four people disappeared through the door, and a venerable gentleman arose from his seat in a corner, and in a tremulous voice said:—

"Sir, let us pray you that there be no bloodshed."

"You are an old fool," said I to him. "How could there be bloodshed with me here merely despising you all for not knowing what I mean when I say it?"

"We know you mean what you say, sir," responded the old gentleman. "Pray God you mean peaceably!"

"Hoity-toity!" shouted a loud voice, and I saw a great, tall, ugly woman bearing down upon me from the doorway. "Out of my way," she thundered at a waiter.



The man gasped out: "Yes, your ladyship!"

I was face to face with the mother of my lovely Mary.

"Hoity-toity!" she shouted at me again. "A brawler, eh? A lively swordster, hey? A real swaggering bully!"

Then she charged upon me. "How dare you brawl with these inoffensive people under the same roof which shelters me, fellow? By my word, I would have pleasure to give you a box on the ear!"

"Madam," I protested hurriedly. But I saw the futility of it. Without devoting further time to an appeal, I turned and fled. I dodged behind three chairs and moved them hastily into a rampart.

"Madam," I cried, feeling that I could parley from my new position, "you labour under a misapprehension."

"Misapprehend me no misapprehensions," she retorted hotly. "How dare you say that I can misapprehend anything, wretch?"

She attacked each flank in turn, but so agile was I that I escaped capture, although my position in regard to the chairs was twice reversed. We performed a series of nimble manœuvres, which were characterised on my part by a high degree of strategy. But I found the rampart of chairs an untenable place. I was again obliged hurriedly to retreat, this time taking up a position behind a large table.

"Madam," I said desperately, "believe me, you are suffering under a grave misapprehension!"

"Again he talks of misapprehension!"

We revolved once swiftly around the table; she stopped, panting.

"And this is the blusterer! And why do you not stand your ground, coward?"

"Madam," said I, with more coolness now that I saw she would soon be losing her wind, "I would esteem it very un-

gallant behaviour if I endured your attack for even a brief moment. My forefathers formed a brave race which always ran away from the ladies."

After this speech we revolved twice around the table. I must in all candour say that the Countess used language which would not at all suit the pages of my true and virtuous chronicle. But, indeed, it was no worse than I often heard afterward from the great ladies of the time. However, the talk was not always addressed to me, thank the saints!

After we had made the two revolutions, I spoke reasonably. "Madam," said I, "if we go spinning round the table in this fashion for any length of time, these gawking spectators will think we are a pair of wheels."

"Spectators!" she cried, lifting her old head high. She beheld about seventy-five interested people. She called out loudly to them:—

"And is there no gentleman among you all to draw his sword and beat me this rascal from the inn?"

Nobody moved.

"Madam," said I, still reasonable, "would it not be better to avoid a possible scandal by discontinuing these movements, as the tongues of men are not always fair, and it might be said by some——"

Whereupon we revolved twice more around the table.

When the old pelican stopped, she had only enough breath left to impartially abuse all the sightseers. As her eye fixed upon them, Thé O'Ruddy—illustrious fighting-man—saw his chance, and bolted like a hare. The escape must have formed a great spectacle, but I had no time for appearances. As I was passing out of the door, the Countess, in her disappointed rage, threw a heavy ivory fan after me, which struck an innocent bystander in the eye, for which he apologised.

*(To be continued.)*

## WHO LAUGHS LAST

By FRED C. SMALE

*Illustrated by Gilbert Holiday*

"HOW the deuce did he get the work?" asked Sturgess, of the County Daily. "He couldn't write *Flasher* stuff to save his soul."

"And it would take a genius to make anything out of this show—that is to say, anything in their line," remarked Bond, of the Central. "Jaw-jaw-jaw every day, with an occasional rotten egg and the usual libel action yarns."

"Still it is an important bye-election and the eyes of England are upon us," chimed in Ricketts, of the small local weekly which gave everything *verbatim* down to the chairman's cough, much to Ricketts' disgust. "That is from last week's leader," he added. "I don't believe the old man ever heard the sentence before. He wanted it double-ended at the head of the column, only unfortunately there wasn't room."

The others laughed. Ricketts' contempt for his paper was notoriously colossal.

"Shut up! Here comes the *Flasher*," said Sturgess, "and apparently bubbling over with tidings of great import."

Sinclair entered the smoking room. He was a slight, mild-looking youngster, with sandy hair and a *pince-nez*, certainly the last sort of individual one would expect to find representing a smart up-to-date paper like the *Daily Flasher*. He carried a handful of miscellaneous papers, prominent among which was a telegram. The orange-coloured envelope had been stuck hastily in his outer breast pocket, where it protruded like a rosette.

"Pressmen are not supposed to wear party colours," observed Bond.

Sinclair blushed and plucked out the envelope.

"I—I say, you chaps, what do you think of this?" he stuttered, waving the telegram.

"Nothing unusual in the colour of the paper," said Sturgess, calmly.

"No, but listen," and Sinclair read the following:—

"Send exciting details of polling—*Flasher*."

Sinclair gazed through his glasses at the others, who looked up with cold unconcern.

"Well," said Sturgess.

"Well!" exclaimed Sinclair, "but it isn't well. They want exciting details, you hear—exciting!"

"Well, give 'em exciting details, my dear boy, give 'em lots," replied Sturgess, stolidly, whilst the others chuckled.

"B—but, I can't. There are none. There won't be any," protested Sinclair, looking blankly at them.

Sturgess sighed.

"What of that?" he murmured wearily. "They want exciting details."

"But they wouldn't be true."

The others laughed loudly.

"My dear fellow, why be so irrelevant?" put in Bond. "What has truth to do with the *Flasher*?"

Sinclair looked nervous.

"But my duty to the public!"

"Is to give 'em something they want. They want exciting details. Give it to 'em, bless 'em. I only wish they'd ask me."

Bond laughed again, and Ricketts gave a grunt which might have meant anything. Sinclair shook his head.

"No," said he, decidedly. "There is no excitement, and I won't invent any. I'm going to tell 'em so."

"I wouldn't do that," said Ricketts, quietly. "Something may turn up."



The poll isn't till Saturday, remember—three days. Things may happen yet."

"Lots," corroborated Sturgess.

Sinclair nodded.

"Ah yes—well I won't wire yet; but there won't be anything anyhow—just the usual crowd, I expect. Well, so-long! I've got half a col. to do for my own people."

Sinclair's regular work was that of a small country agricultural paper, and it had puzzled more than those present to know just how the *Flasher* people had appointed him their correspondent during the Ripplestone election.

When he had gone the others looked at each other.

"Funny how these things get to the wrong address," said Sturgess, enviously. "Now if I'd had that wire—Jehosophat!"

"'Wouldn't be true,'" quoted Bond, contemptuously. "I'd make it true."

"Rath—er," remarked Sturgess. "It would pay to start a shindy—pinch one of the ballot boxes or something."

Sturgess had tried hard to get the *Flasher* work himself, and the fact that this milk-and-water youngster had secured the coveted post galled him, especially as it appeared that Sinclair had no notion of making the most of his opportunity. Suddenly he started and slapped his thigh.

"Look here, you fellows," said he softly, "the *Flasher* wants stuff. This man won't give it 'em. Why shouldn't we?"

"What! Send it on our own?" said Bond, whilst Ricketts first opened his mouth and then closed it again without a word. "They wouldn't take it. Besides, we couldn't do that. Sinclair's their man, you know, after all."

"Yes, yes," said Sturgess; "but what I mean is, let us send it as though from him—just a bit of a lark, you know."

Bond whistled softly, and Ricketts looked at the speaker with a curious expression in his eye.

"It will do him good," persisted

Sturgess. "In fact it will give him a lift. The *Flasher* will get good stuff. I think we can guarantee that. Sinny will get the credit and all will be lovely."

"'But it won't be true,'" again quoted Bond.

Sturgess laughed. "It'll be better. It will be readable. Of course they may have to contradict something, but they won't mind that. The stuff will be on the front page one day and the contradiction away down at the bottom of the money article the next."

"It's a rich idea," said Ricketts, speaking for the first time since Sinclair had left them. "I should work it out."

Sturgess rose and carefully closed the door. "Now look here," said he, as he came back to the table. "We mustn't make it too stiff. We must ladle in details to give versimilitude, as the poet says. You've written novellettes, haven't you?" turning abruptly to Bond.

Bond laughed grimly. He had written a ninety thousand word novel once and received ten pounds for it.

"You'd better leave me out of your scheme," said he. "I don't much care for it."

"Rats!" exclaimed Sturgess, "and Sinclair called you 'an ungrammatical mechanic' the other day."

"He did?—When?" exclaimed Bond, hotly, for he prided himself upon what he called his "classic pen."

Ricketts eyed Sturgess incredulously.

"Well," said Sturgess, "he said the Central printed exclamatory collections of words with no more pretensions to style than a kitchenmaid's love letter."

It was really Sturgess who said this, and Sinclair had absently nodded assent; but the statement sufficed to draw Bond to the table with a squarely set jaw.

"Come along, Rick," cried Sturgess. "You'll join?"

"It will do him good, no doubt," replied Ricketts; "but I think you can do very well without me."

"Well, you won't blow at any rate."

"I'll be an accessory," gravely answered Ricketts. "But you must be careful."

Sturgess chuckled gleefully. He had scarcely counted on winning his fellow conspirators so easily.

"Now then," said he, "what is it to be—a riot?"

"Too commonplace," said Bond.

"Why not annex the lot," said he, "and necessitate a fresh election?"

"Oh, get out!" exclaimed Bond, who was rumbling his hair viciously. "The post office people wouldn't send it on, and I take that whatever we send must be by wire."

"Cert," said Sturgess; "we can't send our own writing up."



Gilbert Soliday

"I SAY, YOU CHAPS, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS?"

"How about a personal shindy between the candidates—'Collision between Candidates'; sounds like a 'Disaster at Sea,' doesn't it? 'Fierce Fracas——'"

"Libel!" ejaculated Ricketts, removing his pipe from his mouth and then replacing it with great solemnity.

Sturgess nodded.

"Yes, yes. Mustn't be personal. I've got it. Ballot-box missing—stolen—can't be found—great mystery—forty clues and no trace. 'The Stolen Ballot-box; the Mystery of a Majority.' How's that, umpire?"

Ricketts' eyes twinkled.

"You might use my typewriter," put in Ricketts, doubtfully. Then he looked up suddenly. "Why not announce that Barradene is coming down to speak on Deller's behalf?"

"What—the Home Secretary!" cried Sturgess. "They'd never swallow it—the *Flasher* people, I mean. They'd telephone the Home Office for confirmation. Barradene come down to this one-horse show?—hardly good enough."

"You must give 'em no chance of getting your news confirmed or otherwise," said Ricketts. "That objection applies to anything you might send."



"True," observed Sturgess, thoughtfully; "but Barradene——"

"Say he's an old college pal of Deller's—special effort—sake of old friendship, and so on," said Ricketts with great insistency.

"By Jove! I think you're about right; we can't better it, and it's no libel," said Bond.

"It's hardly 'exciting details,' but it's important enough, and it might be true," mused Sturgess.

"Of course it might," chuckled Ricketts.

Bond was already writing furiously, and after some consultation a paragraph was concocted, setting forth that the Home Secretary, Lord Herbert Barradene, was coming down from London the following evening in order to place his famous oratorical powers at the service of his old college friend Richard Deller, the Ministerial Candidate for Ripplestone.

"Now what about getting it off?" exclaimed Sturgess, looking -at the others blankly. "It should go to-night."

"At once," assented Ricketts.

"No, no," said Bond; "send it the very last possible moment, so that they can have the least chance of making enquiries. What time does the office close here?—eight, isn't it?"

"Yes" replied Ricketts; "but over at Pendleby they keep open till midnight."

"Yes, I know—I have wired off my stuff from there once or twice," said Sturgess. "That's it, then. Nothing is easier. One of us can bike over to-night and hand it in just before twelve—after the meeting at Lenhurst, which is about half-way. Who'll go?"

"No use my showing—I'm too well known," said Ricketts. "Besides, we publish to-morrow midday, and that means all night for me. To-night's meeting will run into two columns."

"I'll go myself," said Sturgess. "Nobody knows me much at Pendleby, and I can hand in my own and Bond's at the same time."

"I shall have nothing to-night," said Bond. "Not from the meeting, at any rate. Still, I daresay I can vamp up a par. for you to take. If you hand in two or three messages together all the better. Hanged if I know what to give you, though."

"Lazy elephant!" ejaculated Sturgess. "I don't believe you've sent off a line to your people during the three days you've been here."

"I haven't," candidly replied Bond. "In fact, I can't make out why I'm here at all, to tell you the truth. A little footling show like this! Still, I don't know that I object."

"Never mind. Wait till Barradene turns up. You'll have work enough then," said Sturgess, with a grin.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Bond. Ricketts chuckled.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning, Ricketts, red eyed and sallow cheeked, was at the hotel in time to meet Sinclair sallying forth from his bedroom in a state of hopeless bewilderment. A telegram had come from the *Flasher* office—a most enigmatical, mysterious, maddening telegram. Sinclair was quite encyclopædial in his adjectives.

"What is it this time? More exciting details wanted?" queried Ricketts, good-humouredly.

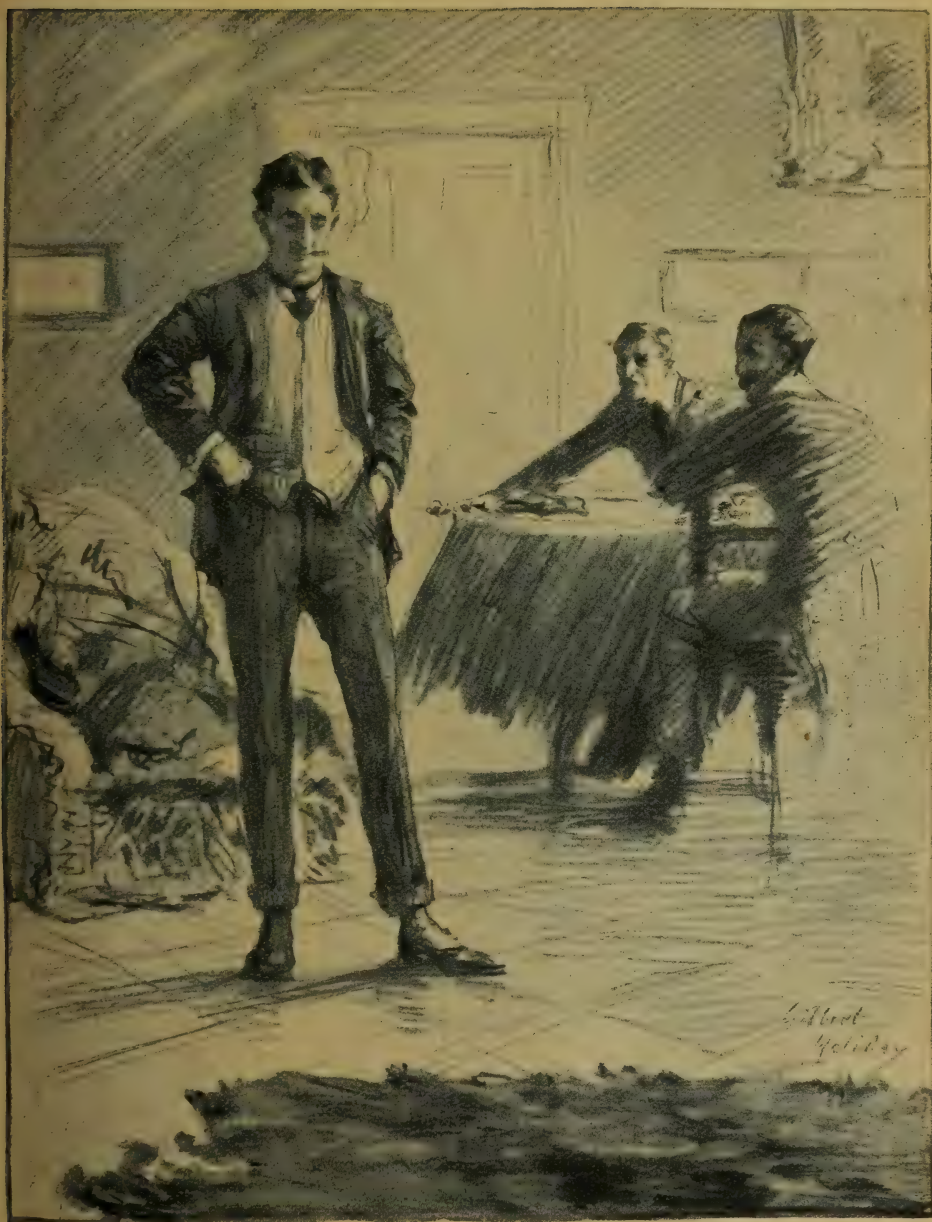
No, nothing of the kind. They were actually praising him. The message was brief—it said:—

"Congratulations. Good stroke, no other papers have it."

What did they mean? No other papers had what? What was a good stroke? And Sinclair, collarless and distraught, struck his forehead despairingly.

Ricketts patted him on the shoulder reassuringly.

"Go slow, my child," said he. "I may as well inform you that some larky friend of yours sent off a wire to the *Flasher* last night, in your name, to the



"'COME ALONG, RICK,' CRIED STURGESS. 'YOU'LL JOIN?'"

effect that Barradene, the Home Secretary, is coming down here to-night, and will address a meeting to-morrow."

"Barradene—here-to-day—to-morrow," stammered Sinclair, in horrified tones. 'In my name—but it isn't true—it——'

"Isn't it?" replied Ricketts, calmly; "that's the joke—*it is true*."

"I—I don't understand," quavered poor Sinclair.

"I don't mean you to," coolly replied Ricketts. "Now all you've got to do, is



to take credit for the scoop. Say you sent the wire—oh, I know what you're going to say—I know it won't be true," added Ricketts, with some impatience. "All the same, nobody will contradict you. Now do as I tell you. Show no surprise. Pretend you know all about it. Somebody—never mind who—wanted to play you a pretty trick, but I hadn't forgotten your bit of straight with me over the tin mine business last spring, so I queered their pitch—see." And he was off, leaving Sinclair to ponder over what he had heard and make the most he could out of Ricketts' somewhat patchy revelation.

The *Flasher* would not arrive at Ripplestone until nearly midday, and Sinclair decided to say nothing about his telegram until the papers arrived, and he was able to see the news for himself. Bond and Sturgess waited eagerly for the crisis in the smoking room.

"He'll shoot himself," said Sturgess.

"No, he won't—he'll cry," suggested Bond.

"Where's that fellow Ricketts? In bed, I suppose," observed Sturgess. "He ought to be in at the death. The papers will be here in a few minutes."

"Where's the victim?" asked Bond.

"Oh, he isn't far off," replied Sturgess. "I heard him talking to the landlord about tomatoes just now."

"Great Scot!" suddenly exclaimed Bond, who was standing by the window looking on the street.

"What's up—papers come?"

"Look—Sturgess—what's the meaning of this?"

Sturgess hastened to the window. A man was posting a huge placard on some hoardings opposite, and the name "Barradene" already appeared in flaming letters. The two watched breathlessly, and presently they read the full announcement that Lord Herbert Barradene, the Home Secretary, would speak in the market at Pendlebury the following night.

They looked at one another.

"I hardly counted on this," said Sturgess, who had turned pale. "Those infernal telegraph people at Pendlebury must have blown—but I never said he was to speak there—I don't understand."

Bond said nothing, but frowned at the flaming statement opposite.

"Telegram for you, Mr. Bond."

He took it from the pert maid and hastily tore it open.

"Ugh," he grunted, crushing the paper in his hand, "my people are disturbed because I didn't get them the news."

Sturgess laughed, though a little uneasily.

"That'll be all right when they find out it's a sell," said he.

"Of course," replied Bond, still gazing out of the window. "Here are the papers," he added.

"I've told the girl to bring 'em here at once," said Sturgess, breathing rather quickly.

They seized the papers, and for a moment or two there was only the rustle of their hurried search.

"Why—what the deuce! here it is in Rick's paper," cried Sturgess, whose quick eye had caught the headline on the front page.

"And here it is in the *Flasher*," said Bond; "but in Ricketts' you say—never!"

Sturgess sat down heavily.

"We've been sold," said he, staring blankly at Bond. "The thing is actually true."

Bond picked up the crumpled telegram from the table.

"Badly sold. No wonder I'm down here," said he, between clenched teeth. "Confound that Ricketts!"

But when Sinclair came to them proudly waving his congratulatory telegram, and Ricketts innocently sauntered in and wanted to know how the deuce he—Sinclair—had picked up such a lot of fat on his own—news in which Ricketts had as he thought possessed full rights—why then Sturgess and Bond seized their hats and fled to a village

some five miles from Ripplestone, where they remained until late in the afternoon, lying perdu in a secluded tavern, laboriously inditing apologetic letters to their respective offices explaining fully how, owing to the iniquitous behaviour of a colleague, they had remained in ignorance of the great tidings.

As Bond observed, they wouldn't be believed, but something had to be done.

Meanwhile Ricketts' editor was enquiring how it was that the *Flasher* had obtained the news.

"I meant to show those London fellows that they don't know just everything," he said complainingly. "Instead of which you go and tell that Sinclair

fellow—for it was you, of course. There was only you and I knew it."

"Well, he did us a good turn that time over the tin swindle, you know," replied Ricketts, soothingly, "and I knew his paper wouldn't get here before we were out."

"Hum—yes," mused the editor. "Well I'd sooner he than anybody else. But what of the others?" looking at Ricketts curiously. "Won't they growl?"

"I don't think so," replied Ricketts. "At any rate I've heard nothing of the sort, and I don't much fancy I shall."

"Well, that's your affair," said the editor, who, being a wise man, asked no further questions.



"TELEGRAM FOR YOU, MR. BOND."



# A RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE

By ELLEN ADA SMITH

*Illustrated by W. Russel Flint*

THE Grand Duke of Weinbergen was distressed beyond measure. For his favourite daughter Theckla by her extraordinary obsession and deviation from all grand ducal precedents, was causing him to tear at the ducal wig and lead his Chancellor such a life that his Excellency had been heard to declare himself at the end of his patience.

For all this wig tearing and exasperations of the Chancellor's was her Serenity Theckla's fault—not a doubt about it. All Weinbergen was ringing with her infatuations, and the burghers could not gather their grapes or press their wine without pausing every moment to ask where it could all end. Old and young agreed in shaking their heads, and awful portents were abroad in the shape of a sickle moon turned wrong way up with its horns in the air while a star lost its hold upon space to shine in a lower orbit.

And her Serene Highness Theckla moved through all this devastation as saucy as you please, her blue eyes sparkling with happiness and her fair head tossed lightly in scorn of opposing forces. For the Grand Duke, fairly at his wits' end, had called up reserves in the person of Prince Cedric of Wassertrudinger, who, in spite of being a widower, was formally betrothed to the Serene Theckla. It was a delicate matter, therefore, to solicit his interference, but he was also her cousin, much older and more experienced—he had been married, which is an education in itself—and the Grand Duke had acted in accordance with his sound advice more than once and never regretted it.

So the prince arrived, and naturally his first enquiries were directed with natural anxiety towards the possible illness of his lady. The Grand Duke

announced that she was better than she deserved to be, and so roused the Prince's worst fears.

"But my fair cousin, where is she; what has happened that she is not here to greet me?"

"She is in the clock tower, on a spare diet of bread and water."

For the Grand Duke was mediæval in mind, autocratic of temperament, and had a childlike faith in the discipline of bread and water for the better ordering of unruly affections. Prince Cedric could not help smiling at this abrupt announcement of his fair in durance vile, but naturally he felt himself her deliverer, in that as in graver things.

"How has she offended? I suppose she has been stealing some of the sun's gold for her hair—little glutton—or else imperilling her charming neck by riding some fiery horse forbidden to her by fatherly care? Let me have the key of the clock tower and your forgiveness condensed into one kiss. I will present it and become surety for her good conduct."

The Grand Duke groaned, for this lightness, so friendly and unconscious, made his task harder.

"My good Cedric, it is a grave matter, something too awful for words connected with my daughter and your promised bride. Do you remember Bluthenheimer's in the Hofplatz?"

The Prince opened his eyes at the apparent irrelevance, but he had admirably restrained manners and was theretofore a patient listener.

"Bluthenheimer's? assuredly. You mean the pawnbroker?"

The Grand Duke, who always tried to be a gentleman, even when his vexed fingers were travelling towards his wig, already awry with the agitation it surmounted, smothered an oath.

"Cedric, that I should live to tell you of such a monstrous—such an unprecedented folly. Can you credit that there was a man of the name of Schnitter serving behind that unspeakable counter one week, to become famous the next by the publication of an ephemeral book of verses—love verses—dedicated to Theckla, which have completely turned her head? Cedric, it is with tears of outraged parental affection that I have to inform you that my misguided child thinks of nothing but that rascally *verdamntes* Schnitterling morning, noon, and night."

Very naturally, being a feeling man, Prince Cedric turned a little pale, but he endeavoured to keep his head, as the Grand Duke was so plainly losing his—wig and all.

"Solitary confinement is bad for that sort of thing; she feels herself a martyr—Schnitterling a hero. Are his verses good?"

The Grand Duke's aristocratic countenance screwed itself up into positive loathing.

"They are so bad," he said, "that I doubt if I can ever suffer the look and smell of white vellum again."

"Poor verses, eh? Then the poet must be handsome. They have met, of course?"

"Unfortunately, yes. Theckla's maid—those confidential curses!—is in per-



"IN THE CLOCK TOWER, ON A SPARE DIET OF BREAD AND WATER."

petual exile. As for the man, there is plenty of him if that is being handsome. I fined him down in the fortress, but he is still large—distressingly large. If he persists in his contumacy, the rope will need to be a stout one."

The man who was younger and wiser shook his head.

"So Schnitter is in the fortress and Theckla in the clock tower. This



policy is disastrously short-sighted; you are playing into their hands if they really mean marriage."

"Cedric, how dare you mention anything so improper in my presence?"

"Improper? Marriage is very respectable, even if it is not royal. But, my cousin, I see a way out of this by reversing everything, only first of all tell me what you propose doing."

"The clock tower and the fortress until they have returned to their right minds—both edifices have excellent locks."

"Wrong, quite wrong. And what is Chancellor Bock's idea for frustrating the promptings of misplaced affection—for naturally as a bachelor and a misogynist he would bring forward some sort of drastic cure?"

"We will send for him and find out. A cure is a cure, and I am handicapped by fatherly indulgence."

The Grand Duke demanded Chancellor Bock as though the attendant had merely to raise a lid and produce him; but he was reported as being fishing in the river, and His Highness frowned imperiously.

"He may be drowning in the river, but I command his presence here, alive or dead. What business has he to be shuffling off all affairs of state when his master is overwhelmed with them?"

This urgent summons was so served upon the Chancellor that he scrambled out of the river and hurried to the scene as fast as his jack-boots would let him. He was stout, and his dignity suffered as he stood panting in the august presence. Prince Cedric greeted him affably, and the Grand Duke irritably motioned the Chancellor to an island of polished floor, where his big boots could do less mischief.

"Your Highness—this sudden summons! Have the *Schwindel-geizen*" (English translation: "giddy goats," as near as may be) "risen again? If so, where is the commandant? They only need a little noise to disperse them."

"My good Bock, you should not be in the river with such risings imminent. Naturally, with anarchy and rebellion on the royal hearth, these heresies permeate all ranks of society—even the lowest. It is on the delicate matter of my daughter's spiritual indisposition that we desire to speak with you. Prince Cedric is anxious to hear if you have any plan."

Chancellor Bock's face set itself into an iron mask, and his eyes flashed fire.

"Your Highness, I would soon settle the regrettable incident. I would convict Schnitter of *lese Majesté*—keep him in solitary confinement for two years, and then detain him during your pleasure—a very long pleasure, for, if he is not mad, he ought to be—in a criminal lunatic asylum. As for the lady"—here the Chancellor forgot himself and gnashed his teeth, for it was always the women who upset his high politics and spoilt everything—"as for her Serene Highness Theckla, I recommend a speedy—a very speedy—marriage with Prince Cedric, and may the Lord have mercy upon him—I mean to say may they both be very happy."

"Your sentiments are mine, Bock, except that possibly you err on the side of mercy. But Prince Cedric won't hear of it."

"Not hear of it! Ah! but I fear he has not seen Schnitter or read his doggerel. It is so martial—in theory—so moonstruck with what fools call love—pah! I forgot the august presence, and crave indulgence. As I said before, I fear the Prince has not seen Schnitter."

"Your Excellency means to insinuate delicately that Schnitter is handsome and young, whereas I lack both those advantages. Neither am I a poet, though I thought myself once." The Chancellor grew scarlet at this accurate rendering of his fears, but the Prince went on quite calmly—he was certainly a gentleman, although not large or strikingly handsome—"Another difficulty arises, too, in the fact that I could not

possibly allow my fair cousin to be forced into marrying me. When we are married—as, of course, we shall be—the bride must look happy, or I will have no part or lot in the affair. Your Highness, we have heard his Excellency upon the matter. Will you kindly summon Theckla's elder sister Sophia, and hear her proposed remedy?"

This was done immediately, although the Grand Duke felt that this adviser would not err on the side of mercy. Her Highness Sophia appeared gladly, for she had always liked her cousin Cedric. Her opinion was asked, and the good woman turned prim to sourness at once. "Such a shocking affair!" she sighed. "The man should certainly be beheaded as a traitor to his sovereign. For Theckla—poor, lost, infatuated child—I recommend a convent. If she consented to take the veil, I am sure the Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration would be only——"

Prince Cedric interrupted her smilingly.

"Without doubt the highest and best of callings, but it needs a vocation. Think you that most charming child could really hide her golden hair in the shadows of a convent? Nay, cousin, suggest something else."

But this was just what Sophia could not do—for she never had more than one idea at a time. The Grand Duke soon lost patience with her, and she as well as the Chancellor was curtly dismissed, that Cedric might impart his plan in confidence. This he did without waste of words, and the Grand Duke's eyes nearly started out of his head.

"What! Is all the world gone stark staring mad or am I? Can you be sane when you suggest that I should release Schnitter, invite him to the palace, and let him bill and coo with Theckla until further notice? Why, it is like throwing oil on flames, and the upshot will be——"

He paused to find language strong enough, and the Prince quietly took up the word.

"The upshot will be disillusionment. At present she is looking at him through the prism of bars; let him come here and let her see all his little failings in the glare of court life—all his little vulgarities, which no tradesman can possibly escape. I know Theckla—she is wilful, headstrong, but she is very royal all the same, and the end will be as I have stated. Let her come to us here, and I will place the case before her, and I will also stay to see the play played out."

Overborne by the stronger mind, the Grand Duke sent for his daughter, who entered gaily in the flush of her triumph, and was not even taken aback by the sight of Prince Cedric.

"Cousin!" she cried, "I am delighted to see you—as a cousin. I expect you induced father to let me out. It was not very bad except when the clock struck; that was awful. Every stroke seemed hammered out on my head."

"And I, too, am delighted to see you, Theckla. I kiss your hand as a cousin merely."

A look of unfeigned disappointment crossed her pretty bright face. Her betrothal had been an affair of state, truly; still, she had not expected to be so tamely yielded up. It was unromantic, to say the least of it.

"You have soon given in, Cedric. How different men are! Now Otto would suffer imprisonment—fight to the death rather than lose me."

"Would he? Surely not against your inclinations; that would scarcely be chivalrous."

"But it would be love, surely, not vapid state formalities governed by horrid old Bock! In one of Otto's lovely poems he calls me a star falling from heaven to be the brightest jewel in the immortal crown of a poet. When would you have evolved anything so perfectly delightful?"

"Did he write that?" asked the Prince, opening his eyes. "The metaphor is poor and clumsy, and surely not



original. I'll swear I have heard it before."

"Or read it. The copies are selling faster than they can be prepared."

"I have not read them yet; that is a pleasure I promise myself in the near future."

"A court scandal always sells," said the Grand Duke sternly to his blooming daughter. "Your cousin has given you a chair, but I do not permit disobedient children to be seated in my presence."

Theckla rose at once; so did Cedric—a nice point in his conduct that any woman would have noticed, even had she been fathoms deep in love with a poet. Without waste of words, the Grand Duke signified to the contumacious fair that he had been talking over the family disgrace with their next of kin, and that as his mouthpiece she was to attend diligently to Prince Cedric's words. Having all the courage of her race and her opinions, she turned to this new mentor with charming impertinence. Until that moment their betrothal had been pretty much what she had called it, but for the first time Cedric felt keen personal interest in winning her—the appearance of a rival is an excellent stimulus to the marital temperament. He might have been Rhadamanthus for the unbiassed balance of his address.

"My dear cousin, as you have decided to favour the suit of Herr Schnitter, your father feels that no considerations of family pride or his own bitter disappointment at your choice ought to stand between you. Having so decided, at what a cost you can imagine, we both think that in order to fit yourself for the duties of your new position you ought to become an apprentice of Bluthenheimer's, the pawnbroker. Under the arms of Lombardy—I allude to the three golden balls—you will learn your husband's business and prepare yourself to be a helpmate as well as a loving wife."

He had really spoken generously, but the royal Theckla was in the mood of an

angry lioness. Sheer amazed wrath made speech difficult, and the Grand Duke, seeing what they might expect, held up an imperious hand.

"Silence, Theckla, you may answer, but with respect. Remember, Cedric will be the head of our house after my death."

"That may be so, father, but he is not my head, and——"

"You speak truly, Theckla; in the future it would be impossible for me to meddle with the domestic—very domestic affairs of Frau Schnitter."

It was a quick riposte, and the Grand Duke chuckled. He began to think very highly of Cedric's method.

"And mark you, my daughter, if you persist in this shocking affair you and he must stick to business; you will have no dower from me—not one *pfennig*!"

With such golden hair Theckla ought to have had a seraphic temper, but, alas, this was not so; she was as angry as the most untutored fishwife, but naturally she raved like the high lady she was.

"I would not take one pfennig added to such insults. It is Otto's greatest joy that by means of his splendid genius he can be above all tasks of service. True, the time has been when his noble nature—not then conscious of its powers—was made captive to the indignity of a low office. But now all is changed. He has found his place above mere accidents of birth, and the idea of our ever needing to return to what he has left so far out of sight is absurd—ridiculous."

"So you think the alliance is an honour to us?" asked the Grand Duke, haughtily. "Well, if the pawnbroker is out of court let us bring forward the poet who hopes to marry and support a family on his execrable maunderings."

Theckla blushed angrily. These sordid speeches, with their indelicate realism, put romance to flight, and she hated them. It was Cedric's turn again.



"'COUSIN,' SHE CRIED, 'I AM DELIGHTED TO SEE YOU—as a COUSIN.'"



"We quite foresaw that you would have a very natural objection to Bluthenheimer's, and if you really think this poet will be capable of further inspiration when once married and settled in the matrimonial jog-trot with its lack of excitement—we propose that he should come to court on a visit of indefinite length, if he will so honour us. His poetical tone will doubtless improve our minds, while in return we can——"

"Teach him table manners," interpolated the Grand Duke, brutally, "and see that he keeps himself clean and tidy. *Gott sei dank!* I never knew but one poet and he never even——"

But Theckla was so overjoyed at this permission that she overlooked the manner of its presentation; her blue eyes shone like veritable stars as she kissed her father's hand and vowed to him that Otto was worth all his grand ducal forgiveness.

"But I don't forgive him," cried her father with testiness, "I am only making the best of a disgraceful business. But you must promise me two things Theckla, on the honour of a lady. You will only permit him to kiss your hand and you will not be seen in public with him until I give my consent."

"Surely, father dear; they are the veriest trifles, costing little or nothing. Dear Cedric you are my good genius—good-bye! I am going to get the key of the fortress."

She was off like a sunbeam, and the two men looked at each other.

"She is in love with the romance not the man," remarked Cedric, positively; "you see she has not the least wish to let him kiss her. And now can you procure me a copy of Herr Schnitter's poems? I am eager to study them."

With a relieved sense of being in able hands the Grand Duke rose. Drawing his sword he spitted a volume high up on his shelves and presented it.

"I kept a copy for possible reference,"

he said grimly; "it soils my sword, but all the spits are in the kitchens."

When Prince Cedric found himself alone he studied the poems, which were neither numerous or long; as he did so a faint suspicion became a certainty, and he laughed not without real humour.

"The Grand Duke was too severe—also the Chancellor. I thought at the time of writing they were exquisite, and even now they are not so bad." He was still laughing as he sought out the Grand Duke, saying:—

"I think during the visit of Herr Schnitter we might encourage a rising of the *Schwindel-geizen*; they are merry fellows those young students, and they will enjoy a bit of a frolic."

The Grand Duke was quite agreeable.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the fortress Schnitter had felt himself both hero and martyr in his gilded captivity, at court he felt himself the latter only. It was difficult to be a hero in the glacial politeness which mirrored him to his own eyes as something very unheroic. The stiff formalities of court life—revised carefully for the occasion—bored the ex-pawn-broking assistant to extinction, when they did not embarrass him so painfully that he felt stretched on a social rack.

The Grand Duke, whose white whiskers always bristled fiercely when the scion of the golden balls crossed his path—Schnitter always tried to make these occasions rare, but there were unavoidable meals at which he had to suffer many trials—and his form of politeness was as terrifying to the victim as much rougher usage might have been.

He was crushed by sarcastic deference—by fulsome flatteries addressed to his genius which so condescended to persons of lower degree. Her serenity Sophia made his life a burden to him by suggesting topics for his muse which he himself had never even heard of. In truth, the feasts were less of meats than of reason, and Schnitter, with his healthy



"THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY, BUT SCHNITTER WAS INVARIABLY HUNGRY."

appetite fresh from half starving in the fortress, did not know the luxury of one good meal. There was plenty to eat of the most refined description, but the victim, with his very ears tingling with blushing embarrassment, could hardly swallow a mouthful. The court ladies fawned upon him gushingly, but their velvet paws always scratched sharply, and he had little or no peace. But his greatest trial was Cedric—the Prince, who always seemed to use velvet paws and never scratch at all. There was something so accusing in his clear direct eyes that the other would wither under them and know himself the fraud he was.

In one thing only did there seem a general consensus of kindness—they allowed him to be alone with Theckla whenever it was possible. The handsome young couple were permitted to ride and drive in the palace park, or

walk in its beautiful gardens, without molestation from any duenna.

They should have been very happy, but Schnitter was invariably hungry, and Theckla saw how they made him suffer without being able to alter matters. She had expected him to understand court etiquette by instinct, and he often compromised her own dignity by not knowing how to bear himself.

Still, they could be together; they could exchange loverlike words by the hour together—only somehow, for a poet whose burning words had electrified a poetical public, Schnitter kept most of his gems of thought to himself. His handsome lips appeared to have little gift of expression, but it may be that hand kissing did not inspire him. He found it a dull form of expressing the devotion of his heart, and Theckla's



perfect satisfaction with it was less inspiring still.

When he was silent with sheer longing for a good unharassed meal, she would think him composing, and one day she taxed him with this exquisite weakness, and asked to be made a sharer in the dream. He responded, with a truly beautiful modesty, that only when the dream became a satisfying reality would he dare to mention it to her.

She laughed, confident that he was inwardly contemplating some masterpiece. She had never cared for poetry until Schnitter, with his handsome eyes and tall figure, had illustrated it for her. Before then she had thought the poetry of motion as exemplified by a spirited horse worth all the verses ever written.

"Otto, it is delicious to think that we shall owe everything—even our happiness—to the exercise of your beautiful gift. Some live by inherited wealth, others in even less pleasant ways"—here she remembered the golden balls of Lombardy and blushed—"but our ways and means will be provided by nothing more sordid than the gifted mind of a poet can produce."

This was news to him. He had imagined that, once married to Theckla, all sordid considerations would vanish in a golden mist. He admired her beauty, but he was by no means prepared to support that beauty by the exercise of his poetical gift.

He was not able to say anything about a Pegasus in harness, for that noble animal was not recognised at Bluthenheimer's; but he hinted of the difficulty of producing masterpieces regularly to tide over rent day and pay taxes with the dreadful regularity fostered by the gatherers of the same. Theckla listened, admiring his modesty, but without more practical knowledge of the necessities of existence than has the cat who imagines that the family cow is kept for her especial benefit. Her vague lightness lay like lead upon

his spirits, and gradually, because they could see each other all day and every day, and because the romance of the fortress and the clock tower had deserted both, Theckla, at least, began to feel bored.

She had tried riding with Otto, but he rode like a tailor and his horses would not obey him. Theckla felt this want in him keenly, and one day she came into the quadrangle as Prince Cedric was mounting his horse.

"Cousin, I should like to ride out with you; it would be pleasant beyond the gates."

Her eyes held honest appreciation, for Cedric was at his best on a horse. His graceful easy mastery of the spirited creature made her think with regret of Otto's uncomfortable manner of progression when mounted. Cedric heard her request with the keenest satisfaction, but he was too good a diplomatist not to hasten slowly. Dismounting, he drew her a little apart.

"My sweet cousin, nothing would give me such pleasure, but we must not ride out together. It would create a false impression, and then think how lonely poor Schnitter would be without you."

Theckla sighed, not without impatience.

"But my life is simply imprisonment! I am not sure if it was not better in the clock tower, for at least I could be alone there. Cedric, tell me—you have been married—need betrothed couples see quite so much of each other—it's awful!"

"It will be better after you are married. The business of life will return to take the place of romance. I think Frau Schnitter will lead the busiest of lives, for I doubt, Theckla, if Otto Schnitter will ever touch his masterpieces. You remember that the aloe blossoms only once in a hundred years."

She left him abruptly with a stormy brow, but it was stormier still at dinner

for Schnitter, wearied out with formal courtship, had tried to overlook her hand and kiss her lips. Instantly she had reminded him of her promise to her father, and his reply had shocked every royal sense.

"But why remember that, *Liebchen*—when the old man does not happen to be looking?"

It was a reply that reeked of the golden balls, and that evening she allowed him to be politely baited without once coming to his rescue.

Prince Cedric read the signs of the times, and from that date the *Schwindel-geizen* became noisily turbulent. The palace hummed like a hive with rumours of the outrageous doings of these riotous spirits, but in the town itself citizens went their peaceful way without much molestation.

One day the guard was doubled at every door and gateway, and Prince Cedric went about in his armour, looking every inch a soldier. The wildest rumours circulated, and Theckla, who had found existence very dull of late, felt her spirits rise with a bound. Cedric watched her, and was well pleased.

"There may be some sort of a skirmish. You will not mind, Theckla?"

"*Mind*—with you and father here! I am a soldier's daughter!"

Her blue eyes sparkled, and every youthful beauty appeared deepened and enhanced with excitement.

"What about Schnitter? I am afraid he may not like a fuss; he is *not* a soldier, you recollect."

"But he has the spirit of one! Look at his poems, they are on fire with martial ardour; no coward could have written them."

The grave Cedric blushed with genuine pleasure, but Schnitter's martial ardour did not seem incompatible with an exceedingly pale face as the noise in and about the palace became more suggestive to his quick imagination. At Bluthenheimer's there had been no strife

save the war of wits, and really there appeared to be disgraceful doings in the grand ducal palace. As the discordant cries drew so uncomfortably near, it was observed that he stood rather behind Theckla than protectingly and gallantly in front of her.

Cedric gave him a sword, and it shook visibly in the hands of one so little accustomed to the practice of war. It was Cedric himself who put the finishing touch to his discomfiture.

"Of course, if they force an entrance—and I am not quite sure that there are not traitors in the palace itself. By the way, Schnitter, were you not once a *Schwindel-geizen* yourself?"

"I used to drink beer with them once," stammered the other, "just that—I never——"

"We quite understand. The only difficulty is that if an entrance should be forced and they find you here—a court favourite, they may think you a renegade. In that case—they are so hot blooded—we should be terribly grieved, but naturally we must think of their Serene Highnesses first.

Schnitter's sword fell with a clatter, for it certainly sounded as though the palace were being taken by storm. Falling on his knees behind Theckla, he caught her dress. Cedric coldly removed his clasp, while Theckla stood lost in wonder at the extraordinary sight of a man who was a coward.

"You are not fit to touch the hem of her Highness's garments. I should say the same if she were only an honest peasant girl—for you are not honest. I promise to spare your life if you will confess that you stole the poems from the coat my *valet de chambre* sold you, that you published them as your own, and so defrauded their Highnesses and the public."

Lost to every fear save the fear of death, Schnitter eagerly assented to the whole indictment, for the rabble was coming nearer and nearer, until the very hall where they were became filled with



masked men. Yet strangely enough they did not forget their manners, for they bowed low to the grand ducal household before pouncing upon the unhappy Schnitter, who appealed vainly to Prince Cedric.

"I keep my promise; your life will certainly be spared, but there is such a thing as righteous punishment. Tar is a healthy preparation, and feathers once worn by an honest goose will not hurt a dishonest one."

Then he turned to the masked company and solemnly handed over the victim.

"Carry out my instructions, but let there be no scandal. The townspeople are to know nothing of this."

He was obeyed to the letter.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning Theckla addressed her cousin in the august presence of the Grand Duke himself.

"Cousin, I should like to ride with you through the town and into the country beyond. I am tired of being shut up."

When they had left the town behind them and reached the open country, Theckla put a question.

"These poems of yours, Cedric. They are so excellent that I want to know if I inspired them—or some other lady?"

Now, this query put the Prince in an awkward predicament; but he answered honestly, like the gentleman he really was.

"They were written years and years ago, Theckla—when you were a little golden-haired child. As to my inspiration, on my honour I cannot remember the particular divinity. I was young, and naturally often in love. Do you forgive my honesty?"

He had dismissed the grooms, so they were most blessedly alone. He came quite close, and she held out her hand.

"I like it, Cedric; and when you kiss my hand like a cousin, I shall—oh! but that is not the right way!"

"For cousins, perhaps not; for betrothed people, very decidedly it is the right and proper fashion."

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## DEVOTION

By KATHERINE MANN

SHE plucked a snowdrop from the grass,  
And when it dropped upon her breast  
She tossed it far and cried:

"'Tis dead."

He picked it up and sighed

And said:

"Alas,

It is the one flower I love best!"



By JEAN COURTENAY

*Illustrated by Albert Clarke*

IT was a yellow room, her sanctum, and seemed to hold eternal sunshine.

It was at the top of the great town house, and extended right through the building from east to west. Wide casement windows with deep window seats opened out, on the east, to the park; so that you looked away into greenness and space, and missed the traffic that surged in the roadway beneath.

But the special feature in the room, though not at first noticeable, was a dome-shaped skylight, filled in with clear amber-tinted glass, and veiled by transparent clouds of pale blue and deep purple chiffon. The effect thus gained was enchanting and unusual. The atmosphere of the whole room seemed bathed in a shimmering radiance caused by the waves of gold, heavenly blue, and tender violet that met and mingled.

The walls were hung with old yellow tapestries, and art treasures abounded.

And she who sat there in the quaint gilded chair?

She was like some old-world princess or fairy queen—motionless and silent; dreaming amid beauty—herself its very essence—yet waiting in unconscious wistfulness for the awakening of Love.

Her silken robe fell round her in lustrous folds, till it lay on the great leopard skins that partly covered the floor. Her white hands and whiter arms, of perfect shape and texture, were extended along the arms of her chair, which simulated the claws of a lion. Her hair, of palest gold fretted with a ripple that held the light a shining prisoner, was parted and drawn loosely from her broad low brows and braided in classical fashion about her head. Her face was perfect in feature and of the soft whiteness of a magnolia bloom. The drooping mouth was infinitely tender, and her delicately marked eyebrows intensified the startling loveliness of her great dark eyes. Whether these last were deepest violet, grey, or brown, was a difficult question to decide. Her square-cut bodice modestly revealed a neck that a sculptor would have loved, and in the lap of her yellow gown lay violets.

Nor were they only there. They nestled everywhere; no corner of the room was without them, and the air was fresh and sweet with their fragrance. For violets were Pamela's favourite flowers.

Her father, to whom she was almost a stranger, had suddenly realised that



his only child possessed unusual beauty, and had desired an artist to paint her in her sanctum.

Pamela was now awaiting the first sitting.

She was so engrossed in thought that she did not hear him announced, and only became aware of his presence by the deep sigh of artistic pleasure that escaped him as he gazed spell-bound on the picture before him.

Then her dreamy eyes came back slowly from their far-off fancies, and met the keen, absorbed scrutiny of the artist.

She moved slightly, and broke the spell.

"Don't move, *please!* Keep just as you are. The pose is absolutely perfect," he said eagerly, and with a certain authority.

She inclined her head graciously. "You are——?" she said, and hesitated.

"Ninian Erroll," he replied with a grave smile and bow.

"I thought so. *Alors*, you have come to paint my portrait, Monsieur, is it not so?"

Her voice was soft and musical, and she had a slightly foreign intonation that was quaint and pretty. It came with a touch of surprise to the artist, for her father was a typical Englishman, proud and reserved.

"I had dared to imagine it possible, Mad'moiselle—till I saw you," he said. "Now, you frighten me."

"But how?" Her wonderful eyes widened with surprise, and he found them deep grey.

"Because—because"—he made a gesture of despair—"no canvas will hold you!"

A little smile lifted the corners of her mouth as she answered:—

"Is that so? I knew not that I was so—*énorme*; you frighten *me* now, Monsieur Erroll!"

The artist was rapidly making the necessary preparations for beginning his sketch. He looked up at her

words, and meeting her droll expression, said:—

"I must have given you a very wrong impression, if that is so. It is not your size, Mad'moiselle, that is all that it should be. It is—your beauty."

His dark head was bent once more over his crayons and paints, and he missed the rose-red that warmed her clear pallor; and perhaps it was as well, for it would but have deepened his despair.

Her smile grew.

"Beauty is but skin deep, they say, Monsieur. Your canvas should be strong enough to hold me even so!"

Ninian Erroll straightened himself from his stooping position, and looked at his fair sitter. Surely her eyes were the tender blue of the violets in her lap. Then he laughed frankly, and said:—

"Ah! Mad'moiselle, it will take a man to hold you, I fear, and a strong, true man at that. The beauty is not all. There is spirit behind that is more difficult to capture; and behind yet again is the woman's heart that will waken only at the coming of the Prince. Isn't that so?"

"I—I think it is," she said, wonderingly, and once more the rare red roses bloomed in her cheeks. "But—how did you know, Monsieur?"

He was standing now before his easel, busy at work, watching each subtle change of expression flit across her face with the artist side of him uppermost, and therefore unhampered by the self-consciousness of the man.

"I read it in your eyes, I think," he replied.

Just then the door opened, and a trim French maid crossed the spacious room and seated herself with her work at the further window.

"Will you tell me about your life—your pleasures—Mad'moiselle?" said Erroll, after a moment's silence. "I can work better if you will talk."

"But certainly; though I fear it cannot interest Monsieur," was the gentle reply.



"I READ IT IN YOUR EYES, I THINK, HE REPLIED."



"I was born in Devonshire, my father's home. My mother—the daughter of an old Huguenot family—died when I was a baby. My father loved her very greatly, and so—he sent me away. I have never lived in England till the last few months."

"That also I knew, Mad'moiselle," said the artist, with one of his sudden smiles. His heart went out to the unloved baby.

"Did my eyes tell you that also, Monsieur? I thought them friends, but it seems they are traitors."

"No; your expression and manner told me that," he said, without looking up from his work.

"I have heard of a 'speaking face,' Monsieur, and without doubt I must have one, since it tells you so much."

"You have, Mad'moiselle," he answered gravely; "but it speaks nothing but good of you, so you need not be alarmed."

There was another short silence, and then the figure in the quaint gilded chair spoke again.

"I have lived all my life in France. Did Monsieur perhaps also know that?"

"Yes, he did."

"And was it my eyes, expression, or manner that conveyed to Monsieur the knowledge? Or—*peut être*—could it have been my nose?"

The sweet voice was apparently quite serious, but as Ninian Erroll glanced up quickly, he encountered a pair of merry eyes that without doubt were brown!

"No; your nose is perfectly innocent in the matter," he said, with corresponding gravity. "It was the joint confession of your words—slightly idiomatic—and your surroundings—your *toute ensemble*." He indicated the room by a wave of his hand.

"What did my surroundings tell Monsieur?" said the girl eagerly.

"First, that you have an artist's appreciation for the beautiful," said Erroll, ceasing to paint while he spoke.

"Secondly, that you have been in Paris; and thirdly, that you love *la belle France* very dearly."

"*Mais vraiment*, Monsieur is a magician, *n'est-ce-pas?*" said Pamela, with an eloquent lifting of her slender shoulders. "You are right in your firstly, secondly, and thirdly—above all, right in your thirdly. I went to my mother's people in France when a tiny baby, and they were kind and good to me. *Après* they sent me to a school near Paris, and there I have been till my father fetched me home to England five months ago. We were taken to see the great city very often. And in it all were three things I loved most.

"The Dome of Les Invalids (he pointed to the shimmering skylight, and she nodded her charming head and dazzled him with a radiant smile); you knew my ideal? La Sainte Chapelle and the Louvre."

Their gaze travelled together round the room, and dwelt on various exquisite models of well-known sculpture in the famous art treasury.

"Ah, but the time was always too short, Monsieur. One could wish to spend years there and not weary, *n'est-ce-pas?*" His quick glance showed perfect sympathy with her enthusiasm. "And then I have here *les souvenirs* from Sèvres, *les Gobelins*. Yes, you are right: those were made there." His eyes had wandered to the tapestries, whither hers followed them. "And Versailles! Ah, that is again a fourth thing that I greatly love. And Fontainebleau! That is another. Ah! the dear, dear country—my mother's country, Monsieur. I love not my father's country so well. *Certainement* I know not London as I know Paris, *cela va sans dire* (the slight, graceful shrug of her shoulders emphasised her words); the life is so crowded, so turbulent, so different from the quiet school days, with their hours of work and prayer and play.

"*Alors*, I weary you with my chatter. I do not know why I tell you this,

Monsieur ; but you are kind—you understand."

Again the radiant smile parted her perfect lips, and exposed a row of small, pearly teeth, as the eager, soft voice ceased speaking.

When Ninian Erroll left that morning, he carried away with him in his heart a picture that would never grow dim, and an ache that would never be cured till he had won fame, and might dare to awaken the Princess.

The sittings took place regularly, and the portrait grew, and so did their friendship.

Pamela's deep eyes gained a gladness—and an added wistfulness of which she knew not, but which enhanced her beauty in the eyes of Ninian Erroll.

His pictured Pamela had found her soul ; it looked out of her glorious eyes, and startled the beholder by its power and loveliness, and to Erroll it prophesied fame. The real Pamela was not quite so confidential after a time. She was gentle and gracious always—that was her nature ; but at times she would become shy and *distracte*, and the ache grew and grew in the artist's heart.

He knew that the Princess was ready to awaken ; but, alas ! the poor Prince was delayed in his coming.

He called her, playfully, "Princess," in memory of his first impression about her. He had made her promise not to look at the picture till it was finished.

"Do I grow quickly, Monsieur ?" she asked, one day. "I wait with impatience to see myself."

"Yet you must not grow too fast, Princess, or you will not have strength to live. Do I tire you with the sittings ?" he added, wistfully.

"*Mais non*, Monsieur," was the eager reply. "They are my——" she hesitated.

"Your what, my Princess ?" his dark eyes questioned eagerly.

"They make me very happy, Monsieur," was the shy answer, and the

roses that only bloomed for Ninian Erroll crowded into her face.

"You will spoil me for any other sitter, Princess Pamela," said the artist, wondering how much longer he would be able to crush down the longing to gather her close to his heart. Her naïve confession made the temptation almost irresistible.

Her father was delighted with the portrait, and anxious for it to appear in the Royal Academy that year.

"You have succeeded wonderfully, Erroll," he said with more enthusiasm in his manner than it often showed. "My little daughter is before me in all her winsomeness ; and"—his voice softened—"her mother looks at me out of her eyes. This picture will make you famous, I hope," he added kindly.

"I hope so, sir. And, if it does, I may come and ask you a far greater favour."

"Indeed !" The Englishman retired hastily into his shell. "I hope it may lie in my power to grant it, if so. But there will be time enough to discuss that when the picture is accepted."

The picture was hung on the line.

It represented Pamela as the artist had first seen her, sitting in the gilded chair, with her great dark eyes gazing out into space. And in painting her eyes Erroll had succeeded wonderfully, for they were as evasive in colour as the living counterparts. But instead of the dreamy, far-away look, there was a dawning recognition in their soft, tender depths, as if she already saw the Prince in the far distance, and was longing to welcome him. Her drooping mouth was shaped for a kiss, and her lap was full of violets.

It was called "The Princess Waits," and was proclaimed the crowning triumph of art in the exhibition.

Ninian Erroll found himself famous, and besieged with orders. So he asked that "greater favour," which was not denied him, and then persuaded



## THE IDLER

Pamela to let him take her to see the picture.

She was quickly ready, and in her clinging woollen gown of creamy tint, with violets in her belt and in the drooping white hat, she looked to him fairer than ever.

It was early in the day, and the room was empty—blessedly empty—when they arrived there.

And when Pamela had gazed at her pictured self for some minutes, she turned to the artist and said:—

"You said you saw it in my eyes. Is it there now?"

"Look at me and I will tell you," was his reply.

She raised her eyes to his, but what she saw there startled her, for, after a fleeting glance, her white lids fell.

Then Ninian Erroll drew her closer and closer, and, stooping his dark head, laid a tender kiss on the curved lips, while he whispered:—

"Wake up, Princess—your Prince has come!"



"WAKE UP, PRINCESS—YOUR PRINCE HAS COME!"

## THE DIVERSIONS OF A PRINCESS

By A. CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

### V.—MAISIE PRICE

"SHE is making my whole life miserable!" said Anne, and she buried her face in the punt cushions, and wept profusely into them.

"It is a perfectly heavenly day, and the punt is in the prettiest, shadiest spot on the river. For goodness sake, sit up, and stop making a sillybilly silly of yourself!" said Wisdom.

"The beauty of the weather only mocks me," said Anne, sobbing some more.

"I wonder your pride lets you cry like that!" said Wisdom.

"I haven't any pride!" said Anne, and took a melancholy pleasure in the frank admission. "I'm much too miserable!"

"Those cushions are stuffy and warm, not to say unpleasantly damp," said Wisdom. "You might as well be comfortably miserable; for there's no one here to witness this pathetic outburst!"

"Nothing could make me less miserable," said Anne, sitting up, however, and arranging the cushions more becomingly. "You can reason as much as you like, but you cannot controvert the fact that Maisie Price has taken Arthur James and the canoe, and left me all by myself!"

"But Maisie asked you to go with them," said Wisdom.

"Yes, Maisie did!" said Anne; "after Arthur had invited her to come in his old canoe with him! That was where the humiliation came! Think I was going to accept her patronage! Not much!"

"Come, come, it might be worse," said Wisdom. "It seems to be Maisie's success, rather than the loss of Arthur that's disturbing you!"

"I was *very* fond of Arthur," said Anne, with an irritated little wriggle. "I am *sure* I was fond of him. He is so clean and polite and useful in a punt. I don't say that he's wildly exciting!"

"Good gracious, no! I shouldn't think you did!" said Wisdom. "Poor darling Arthur hasn't an idea in his head that he didn't find in a newspaper."

"A poor thing but mine own," quoted Anne, leaning her head back against a china-blue cushion, and feeling wistful, but effective. "I did think him mine!" and Anne sighed and looked across the shimmering waters, and slightly frowned as a launch puffed by, in a way which Anne rightly considered unfeeling.

"The most annoying thing of all is to think I have wasted so much cleverness and charmingsness on an atom like that, to be thrown to one side when Maisie Price arrives," said Anne, sending a withering scowl after the noisy and generally distracting launch.

"Maisie Price is a very attractive girl," said Wisdom, coolly. "There's no doubt about it, American girls have something that is fascinatingly chic and self-contained about them."

"I'm not denying her attractiveness," said Anne. "I'm complaining of it!"

"Still, as she's going to stay with you for at least a week, you'd have more to complain of if you found her boring or repellent," said Wisdom. "You'll have to see a good deal of her!"

"Not if Arthur's available," said Anne, trying to sneer.

"That is a foolish remark to make to yourself," said Wisdom, "because you know perfectly well that Maisie has never lifted a finger towards annexing



Arthur. She accepts his homage as a matter of course, but she doesn't concern herself at all about it, and if you had accepted her invitation to join them this morning——"

"Hoo! I see myself!" cried Anne.

"She would have enjoyed your society precisely as good-humouredly and appreciatively as she is now enjoying the society of Arthur," said Wisdom, who rarely desisted from speaking through Anne's wickedest fits of temper. "It's entirely your own fault that you are sitting here by yourself, disenjoying yourself so very greatly."

"I'm sensitive," said Anne, trying hard to retain her feeling of ill-usage, "and proud. And I'm not going to forgive her like this, when she's taken Arthur away from me."

"Anne, my dear," said Wisdom, "there are several useful hints to be acquired from this reflection, if you will allow yourself to listen to me."

"Oh, go on," said Anne rather grumpily, but she folded her hands on her knee, and gave up her previous occupation of pulling a leaf to pieces. "Go on with your old lessons," said Anne; "not that it's any use, for I never remember them when they would be useful. However, go on!"

"I will," said Wisdom, who never despaired of making a permanent impression on Anne, *some* day. "The first lesson is, that a girl should never admit a man's allegiance even to herself, much less to her friends, and, least of all, to the man. Hang chains on a slave, and, though he may not be strong enough to break them, he'll be conscious of them."

"Some people glory in their chains," said Anne with a slight toss of her head.

"When they're new," said Wisdom. "But my hints are for you, not for slaves. And the moral deduction from the first lesson is that if you do not appear conscious of a person's devotion, you cannot appear humiliated when it is taken away from you."

"I must seem unconscious," said Anne. "Oh, well, that's easy enough!"

"The *affectation* of unconsciousness will not be of much use to you," said Wisdom. "Don't be ready to assume you're at all important to a man because he seems pleased with your society. The attentions men pay to women are due far less to their attractiveness than to circumstance. For instance, while you were the most charming girl at hand, Arthur——"

"I never thought for one moment that Arthur was seriously in love," said Anne, with slightly flushed cheeks. "I should not have been half so happy and amused if he had been. You know I hate men to be seriously in love, they are so silly."

"Then what on earth have you been crying your eyes out for?" said Wisdom.

"I hate Maisie Price none the less, because I don't care twopence about Arthur," said Anne, viciously.

"And so you are not only going to make yourself unhappy all the time Maisie is staying with you, but you purpose giving that insignificant shrimp of an Arthur the pleasure of seeing you sulking because he has transferred his devotion to another shrine," said Wisdom. "As to what Maisie will think, to see you behaving like this over a—an atom of mankind, whom *she* regards merely as a piece of river furniture——"

"Why, I've been a perfect *idiot*!" said Anne, sitting bolt upright, thoroughly shocked and arrested. "Good heavens! what shall I do to show her I don't care?"

"Make friends with her, of course," said Wisdom. "You'll really find her infinitely more amusing than poor Arthur."

"I should hope she'll find *me* more amusing than poor Arthur!" said Anne, trying the effect of a green cushion behind her hair, and wondering whether blue or green was most becoming.

"If you like, you can have it your own way," said Wisdom. "I shouldn't be surprised if she wouldn't teach you that perfectly ravishing way in which she does her hair, and she *might* give you the address of her dressmaker, with a little tact and persuasion. And even when you hated her, you couldn't help laughing at the quaint things she says. So now you are going to be friends with her . . ."

"Am I?" said Anne, hesitating just a little.

"Well, what point is there in being anything else?" said Wisdom. "What do you gain? Nothing—not even Arthur! Sulkiness never attracts, my dear. Besides which, you are most distinctly and definitely attracted towards Maisie, aren't you?"

"There's the canoe coming round the bend!" said Anne.

"Hail them," said Wisdom. "Then you can all go home together."

"They won't think I'm trying to join on, will they?" said Anne. "If that little ass of an Arthur thought I minded his absence to-day——"

"Tell them the truth, then," said Wisdom. "Say how much you've been

regretting you hadn't come with them all the day, and wind up with a moral remark to the effect that your regret is a fitting punishment for your laziness."

"Laziness?" said Anne.

"Which prevented you from accepting Maisie's invitation, of course!" said Wisdom.

"Do you think they'll swallow that?" said Anne. "Maisie's a bright girl!"

"She's also a polite one," said Wisdom. "Besides the only infallible way of deceiving people is to tell them the truth, and deduce the moral that suits your purpose."

"Thanks!" said Anne, and pushed into the stream.

"Don't overdo it," said Wisdom.

"I am holding on to you as tightly as tight!" said Anne. "You are a good friend, and you've completely cheered me up. In fact, I feel the beginning of a genuine personal affection for Maisie!"

"Hullo!" cried Maisie. "So *here* you are! We *have* been wishing you'd come with us!"

"Not half so much as I have," said Anne.

And Wisdom smiled approvingly.



# WEE MACGREGOR

## HEART'S DESIRE

By J. J. B.

*Illustrated by Angeline Macgregor*

**M**ACGREGOR had slept in, but he entered his grandparents' kitchen without hesitation or apology, for he knew the lenient ways of the old people.

They had finished breakfast, and were seated on either side of the hearth, Mr. Purdie beaming gaily at his spouse, and she smiling back at him happily, though with wet eyes. Mr. Purdie held a letter in his right hand and a telegram in his left, and as the boy appeared he was saying:—

"Dod, ay, auld wife; I'll read them again to please ye."

"Oh, here Macgregor!" said Mrs. Purdie, hastily wiping her eyes. "Come awa', dearie. I thocht I wud let ye get yer sleep oot, so I didna wauken ye."

"Ay, here he comes wi' as mony feet 's a hen!" cried the old man, jovially. "Guid mornin' to yer nicht-cap, Macgregor!"

Greetings over, Mr. Purdie drew his grandson close to him, and, smiling broadly, said:—

"I've a fine bit o' news fur ye, ma mannie. Whit dae ye think it is, eh?"

"I'm to get an egg to ma breakfast, Granpaw?"

"Deed, ay; ye're gaun to get an egg, dearie," put in his grandmother. "I'm jist gettin' yer breakfast ready fur ye. But yer Granpaw's got some rale nice news fur ye." And Mrs. Purdie, tremulous with partly suppressed excitement and emotion, set about preparing the youngster's place at table.

"Whit is it, Granpaw?" inquired Macgregor. "Am I to get the wee dug hame wi' me?" He referred to a

puppy which a friend of the Purdies had offered him a couple of days before, the offer being subject to his parents' approval, for which his grandfather had promised to write. "Am I to get the wee dug?" he repeated eagerly. "Dis Paw say I can tak' it hame to Glesca?"

"Ah, we'll see aboot the wee dug anither time," said the old man. "It's faur finer news that I've got fur ye the day. Ye've got a wee brither, Macgregor!" Mr. Purdie chuckled with delight and lay back in his chair to watch the effect of the announcement.

"I hivna," said Macgregor, not understanding.

"Ay, but it's true, laddie. Ye—ye jist got him yesterday. Here a letter frae yer Paw tellin' us aboot it, an' at the end yer Paw says: 'Tell Macgregor he's got a wee brither noo.'"

"Is't a new baby ye mean?" asked Macgregor at last.

"Jist that—a baby brither," Mr. Purdie replied.

"A baby brither," echoed Mrs. Purdie in a voice of softened jubilation. "Ye'll be a prood laddie noo, Macgregor!"

The boy did not reply immediately. He broke the silence with the curt question—"Is't an awfu' wee yin?"

His grandfather laughed. "I suppose it'll jist be the usual size, ma mannie."

"Usual size!" cried Mrs. Purdie, suddenly indignant. "Dis John no' say in his letter that the doctor said he never seen a splendifer baby?"

"So he did," admitted her husband humbly. "He's a fine big yin ye're

wee brither, Macgregor," he added, as if to reassure the youngster.

"Hoo big?"

"Aw, I canna tell ye that. But yer Granmaw's gaun to Glesca the day, an' she'll be comin' back the morn's nicht wi' a' the news aboot yer wee brither."

"I hope it's bigger nor Jeannie wis when she wis new. She wis awfu' wee—an' when she grat, she wis jist like a wee monkey wi' a rid face."

"Ye wis like that yersel' yinst," interposed Mrs. Purdie, endeavouring to conceal her annoyance at her grandson's lack of appreciation. "Come awa' an' tak' yer breakfast noo, fur I maun get ready fur the road."

"Did ye bile ma egg herd?" inquired Macgregor as he seated himself at the table. "I dinna like egg when it's driddly."

"Ay; I biled it herd. Are ye no' gaun to ask a blessin' afore ye tak' the tap aff?"

Macgregor continued tapping the top of the egg with his spoon until the fragments of shell could be removed. Then he dug out a spoonful of white and peered in at the yolk.

"Ay; it's herd," he observed in a tone of satisfaction, and, bowing his head, remained still and silent for about ten seconds. Looking up, he inquired, "D'ye think I'll get takin' hame the wee dug, Granpaw?"

"We'll see, we'll see," Mr. Purdie returned evasively.

His grandmother looked at him reproachfully ere she left the kitchen to make some preparations for the journey from Rothesay to Glasgow. "I thoct ye wud ha'e been thinkin' mair o' yer wee brither nor a bit dug, dearie," she said gently.

Macgregor looked uncomfortable, but continued eating, casting an occasional glance at his grandfather, who had taken up the morning paper.



"ARE YE NO' GAUN TO ASK A BLESSIN'?"

"Granpaw," he began at last, "did Paw no' say onythin' aboot the wee dug in the letter?"

Mr. Purdie shook his head.

"Nor in the—the telegraph?"

"Na, na, laddie. Ye see, yer Paw wud be that taken up wi' yer wee brither, he wudna be mindin' aboot the wee dug. Ye can speir at him an' yer Maw aboot it when ye gang hame."

"But I ken they baith like dugs. I wis to ha'e gotten yin last year, but it got rin ower when the man wis bringin' it to wur hoose."

"That wis an unco peety," Mr. Purdie remarked sympathetically, from the midst of a violent letter to the editor on the fiscal question. "An unco peety," he repeated absently.

"D'ye no' think Paw an' Maw wud be rale pleased if I wis takin' the wee dug hame wi' me? It wud gi'e them a nice surprise, an' it wud gaird the hoose fine. Eh?"

"Whit wis ye sayin', ma mannin'?" said the old man, without impatience, laying the newspaper on his knee.

Macgregor put a spoonful of egg in his mouth, and repeated his query and





Angusine Macgregor  
1903

"MACGREGOR FELL DEEPER THAN EVER IN LOVE WITH THE PUPPY."

remarked Mr. Purdie. "Macgregor an' me'll mind about the key."

"See, dearie," said Mrs. Purdie to her grandson, who was busy twisting out the button of a hassock on which he sat by the hearth, "ye micht cairry the dishes frae the table to the jaw-box, fur it's gaun to tak' me a' ma time to catch the boat."

Macgregor sprang up, and did his best to assist his grandmother, for he had a feeling that he had offended her in some way. Moreover, he was going to ask a favour of her.

But, somehow, when, half-an-hour later, he was bidding her good-bye on the pier, he could not manage to put his desire into words, and she sailed away without the urgent message he had intended sending to his parents.

"Weel, whit wud ye like to dae noo?" inquired Mr. Purdie, as they moved shorewards. "It's ower cauld the day fur sittin' ootbye, but we micht tak' a wee walk afore we gang hame. In the efternune we'll hap wursel's weel, an' tak' a ride in the caur to Port Bannatyne. Wud ye like that, Macgregor?"

"Ay, Granpaw. But wull we no' gang an' see Joseph noo?"

"Wha?"

"Joseph—ma wee dug."

"Toots, laddie, ye're gaun ower quick!" said the old man, good-humouredly.

Macgregor slackened his already easy pace. "I furgot ye wisna as soople as me," he said kindly.

"I didna mean *walkin'* ower quick, ma mannie," returned Mr. Purdie, touched by the youngster's consideration. "I meant ye wis makin' up yer mind ower quick about the dug."

"Whit wey that?"

"Aweel, ye see, I'm no' jist shair ye can get takin' the beastie hame wi' ye. Wud it no' be best to wait till ye get wrod frae yer Paw?"

"But I want to gi'e him an' Maw a fine surprise. I tell't ye they liket

argument, adding: "An' I wud ca' it Joseph."

"Efter Maister Joseph Chamberlain?" said Mr. Purdie, looking amused.

"Wha's he? I dinna ken him. I meant wee Joseph—him that's lyin' badly. He's the laddie that thoct there wis monkeys at Rothesay, an' wantit me to bring him hame some partins frae the shore. D'ye no' mind aboot him?"

"Fine, fine. An' is the puir laddie nae better yet?"

"Naw. But he wud be gey proud to ha'e ma wee dug ca'ed efter him. He yinst ca'ed a when white mice efter me. But I wisna heedin' muckle aboot that."

"It wis maybe no' vera complimentary."

"Whit?"

"I said it wis may be no' vera complimentary, Macgregor. But never heed that. Ha'e ye had plenty to eat?"

"Ay. I'm dune noo," Macgregor replied, leaving the table. "Are we gaun ootbye noo?"

"Rest ye a wee, an' then we'll gang an' see yer Granmaw awa' in the boat?"

"An' efter that we'll gang an' see the wee dug. Eh, Granpaw?"

Before Mr. Purdie could reply, his wife returned and set to work to tidy the kitchen. "Mistress McTavish'll luk efter the hoose till I get back," she said to her husband. "Leave yer check-key wi' her at nicht, an' she'll come in in the mornin' an' licht the fire an' mak' the breakfast."

"An' obleegin' neebour's a mercy,"



Angus Macgregor  
1903

“MR. PURDIE HAD A DECIDEDLY SULKY TRAVELLING COMPANION.”

dugs. An’ if they didna want the wee dug they wud ha’e pit it in the letter.”

“Weel, weel, that’s dootless yin wey o’ lukin’ at it,” admitted Mr. Purdie, feeling rather perplexed. “But—but, ye see, laddie, ye—ye’ve got a wee brither noo.”

“But he’ll ower wee to hurt the dug, an’ I wudna let Joseph bite him, Granpaw.”

“I’m shair ye wudna. But a’ the same, I doot it wudna dae to ha’e a beast in the hoose the noo.”

“We had a cat when Jeannie wis new.”

“Had ye?”

“Ay, had we!”

“But a cat disna mak’ a noise, laddie,” said Mr. Purdie, groping for arguments; “an’ ye canna keep a dug quate—can ye?”

“A dug disna mak’ near the noise a new wean dis. I’m shair I wud keep Joseph quate, Granpaw. Wull we gang an’ see him noo?”

“Aweel, we’ll gang an’ see him fur twa-three meenits; but, mind, ye mauna set yer hert on the beastie, laddie, fur I

doot ye’ll no’ get takin’ him hame to Glesca.”

“Wait, an’ ye’ll see,” returned Macgregor, to whom a happy thought had just occurred. “I’m gaun to write a letter to Paw.”

“’Deed, ay. He’ll be prood to get a letter frae his big laddie,” said the old man heartily.

“Wull ye help me to spell it, Granpaw?” the other asked, at the end of a longish silence.

“I’ll dae ma best, but ma spellin’s no’ whit it used to be.”

In a little while they reached the house of Mr. Purdie’s friend, and Macgregor fell deeper in love than ever with the puppy, being quite convinced that it answered to “Joseph.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Whenever the obliging Mrs. McTavish had cleared the kitchen table of the remains of the simple dinner, Macgregor perched himself on a chair and laid several sheets of paper before him.

“Are ye gaun to write it wi’ a pincil!” asked his grandfather.

“Ay. I’ve got a bew pincil. Paw’ll



like that fine. The last time I wrote to him, I dune it wi' a rid yin. It wis when I was bidin' wi' you. But I can write faur better noo, an' I dinna need to kneel on the chair. Hoo dae ye spell *faither*? I ca' him that in writin'."

Mr. Purdie spelt that word and several others to the best of his ability; and the boy, whose tongue made nearly as many movements as his fingers, completed—after several abortive attempts—an epistle which gave him the highest satisfaction, and caused his elderly companion to pat him on the back and to say, in the kindest voice: "Weel dune, weel dune, Macgregor!"

Omitting the address and the date, the letter read as follows:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—I am quite well and hope you are and so is mother and Jeeny and the litle new baby. There is a we dog. I want it. Can I get takeing him home. It is a beuti-ful dog and he will gard the house for theifs. It is a fine day. He ansers to Joseph. Please right soon.

"Your dear sun,

"MACGREGOR ROBINSON."

As speedily as Macgregor could hurry Mr. Purdie forth—the old man missed his accustomed nap—the letter was taken to the post, after which the twain took the car to Port Bannatyne.

\* \* \* \* \*

Next evening Mrs. Purdie was home again, full of thankfulness for her daughter and overflowing with pride in her new grandson.

"They're baith jist daein' splendid," she exclaimed again and again, while her husband nodded his head and beamed his satisfaction.

Macgregor, waiting for the evening post—for his grandmother had delivered no message, save that of love, to him—listened patiently to the eulogies on his newest near relation, and promised half-a-dozen times to be a shining example and unwearying protector to the latter.

But when the post came at last, there was no letter for him.

It was not until bedtime that Mrs. Purdie recollected that she had a message from his father after all.

"I'm unco vexed I furgot to tell ye it the first thing, dearie. Yer Paw wis rale pleased and prood to get yer letter, but he hadna time to write back. He's gey thrang the noo. But ye're to gang hame the morn, so ye'll see him then, dearie. Ye're needit to help them in the hoose, an', furbye that, they're missin' ye sair. Wee Jeannie's wi' Mistress McFaulan. So yer Granpaw'll tak' ye to Glesca the morn's mornin'. Noo, it's time ye wis in yer beddy-baw, or wud ye like a piece first?"

Macgregor shook his head. "Did—did ma Paw no' say onythin' aboot Joseph?"

"Wha, dearie?"

"Joseph—ma wee dug."

Mrs. Purdie looked at her husband for help.

"Macgregor, ma mannie," said Mr. Purdie gently, "I'm near as vexed as ye cud be yersel', but yer Paw says ye mauna tak' the beastie hame wi' ye."

The youngster restrained himself—at anyrate, until he was alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Purdie had a decidedly sulky travelling companion the following forenoon, and was genuinely grieved as well as surprised when the latter refused his offer of a bottle of lemonade on board the steamer.

"Never heed, Macgregor, never heed," he repeated frequently, but the boy did not seem to hear him.

After a dismal journey they reached the Robinson's abode, and, it being the dinner hour, John himself opened the door to them.

Possibly Macgregor remembered his home-coming after the first appearance of his little sister Jeannie, but on that occasion he had returned very home-sick and without a regret after an

absence of several weeks, and had dropped into the free arm of his mother with a sob of relief. But now, he had been away but a few days, and——

"Weel, Maister Purdie! Weel, Macgregor!" said John, cordially, but not boisterously. "Come ben, come ben. Yer Maw's wearyin' fur ye, laddie," he whispered to his son.

"Whit wey——" began the boy, and halted, for there seemed to be something unfamiliar about his father. "Whaur's Maw?" he asked, suddenly, as he caught a glimpse of a strange elderly woman walking across the kitchen with a white bundle in her arms. "Whaur's Maw?" he repeated, anxiously.

John whispered something to his ather-in-law, who nodded gravely, and stepped softly into the kitchen.

"Come wi' me, Macgregor, ma son," said his father, taking his hand.

And presently Macgregor was in the parlour, which now looked so queer as a bedroom that he clean forgot everything else and stared amazed till he saw somebody on the bed smiling and beckoning to him.

"Canny noo, ma mannie," whispered his father, "canny noo."

With a sore lump in his throat and a half-choked cry at his lips, Macgregor reached his mother's arms.

"Are ye no' weel, Maw?" he sobbed. Never in his life had he felt so sad.

"Ma dear wee laddie," murmured Lizzie, and began to comfort him.

John tried to smile on his wife and first-born, but failed miserably, and stole noiselessly from the room.



"'WHIAUR'S MAW?' MACGREGOR ASKED."



## OFF THE BANKS

By PATRICK McGRATH

THERE is no modern industry that causes more suffering and death than the fishing on the Grand Banks, neither is there any whose daily record is a more perfect story of heroism and self-sacrifice. On the Grand Banks, those vast submarine shoals which lie about one hundred miles off the coast of Newfoundland, there gather every year some twelve hundred vessels carrying 20,000 men or more. When the Banks are reached the vessels anchor. The captain and the cook remain on board, while the rest of the crew, numbering anywhere from twelve to twenty men, go out daily a few miles from the ship in dories to set the trawls. The dories are flat bottom boats so built that they "nest" into each other like cheese boxes when they are piled up on the vessel's deck. They carry two men, each of whom works a pair of oars, and, frail skiffs as they are, they make splendid weather when well handled. The trawls, which are long lines with hooks attached to them at intervals, are overhauled every morning by the men and the fish carried in the dories to the ship, there to be cleaned and salted.

The perils of this kind of fishing are very real and very great, not only to the vessels from the sudden and violent storms which sweep that part of the sea, and from the ocean liners racing through fogs across these anchorage grounds, but still more to the men in their dories looking after the trawls. It happens again and again during every season that fishermen, separated from their schooner by sudden squalls and lost in the brine drift about for days, suffering from cold, hunger and every attendant misery, and often perish miserably or are permanently crippled from frost-bite.

Yet, even from this constant record of suffering and heroic endurance, certain experiences stand out as particularly remarkable, notably that of two brothers named Fleming, who were part of the crew of the trawler *Jubilee*. The *Jubilee* left St. Johns on April 10th, 1888. Eight days later, while Peter and Edward Fleming were at the trawl, a sudden fog shut out the vessel from them. They started to row toward her, when a sea struck their dory and carried away three of their four paddles. The light boat, relieved of control, overshot the oars and the men saw themselves doomed to a night adrift. Peter, a man of forty-three, with nine years "banking" behind him, had been adrift once before and knew what it meant.

First of all, he threw away his pipe and tobacco, as smoking induces thirst, and persuaded his brother, a first trip man, and some six years younger than himself, to follow his example. Then taking a thwart, Peter split it, and with a line improvised a second paddle, so that by rowing they might keep warm. He then converted a fish tub into a "drag" and threw it overboard in order to keep the boat's head to the seas.

The situation of the two brothers was unusually desperate, for they had nothing with which to guide their boat, no food, or water, or shelter, nor any extra covering but their oil-clothes. The dory was empty save for a second trawl tub. They tried to sleep by turns, and the sleeping brother used the trawl tub to partially protect his head, while his body, stretched out along the bottom of the boat, was constantly drenched by the heavy spray which dashed over the little craft, and forced the brother on watch to bail continuously. The Newfoundland bankmen consider it cowardly to carry food or water in their boats



"FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR WIVES AND CHILDREN."

*Drawn by M. J. Burns.*



and though because of this very case of the Flemings, a law was passed to force them to do so, it has always remained a dead letter. The Flemings fully realised that if they were ever to see their wives and children again it could only be by the most careful husbanding of their strength. Accordingly from the very beginning they ordered things well, sleeping and watching alternately and using their oars every two hours. Fearing that their own vessel could not reach them, Peter, who knew the region, tried to work south of Cape Race, where ships are always passing.

On the third day they drifted into a floe of ice. The ice was of course saturated with brine and was of no use in slaking their thirst, while it kept their dory in constant danger of being crushed. That afternoon Edward's fingers became frost bitten and Peter lent him his own mittens, going bare-handed himself. On the fourth day their feet grew callous. They were unable to exercise them, and with the water soaking through their boots the limbs lost sense and the frost ate into them. The fog still hung over them, but this had its favourable side, for the mist softened their throats somewhat and helped their thirst. Days and nights passed. Each morning they lapped the moisture from their oiled coats which they had spread over the thwarts to collect the dew, and those small pools of brackish water were more delicious than nectar. They knew that their boots were soaked by the sea water, the salt of which would intensify their agony of thirst, and they had the courage to refrain from chewing the leather in the effort to appease their hunger.

None but men strong physically and mentally could have survived such an experience. For thirteen days and nights—less four hours—they were tossed about on the sea, scorched by the sun at noon, and chilled by the cold at night. Their prayer always was that

if spared they might escape the loss of hands or feet, for without them a fisherman can do but little, and sorry is the lot of the family whose bread winner is helpless on this stern and rugged sea-board. They cared little for themselves, having often looked death in the face, but for the sake of their wives and children they struggled to live.

At last, on the afternoon of April 31st, they were rewarded for their brave struggle for life against such fearful odds by the sight of a ship. The hope of rescue gave them new vigour, and they paddled frantically in the direction of the vessel; but their little dory was a mere speck on the ocean, and it needed a keen eye to see her even a mile away. The ship was passing on without noticing them, when in despair they managed to elevate an oil-coat on an oar. The signal was seen, and the ship bore down on them. As she approached a line was thrown to the men. It proves the vitality of these two hardy voyagers that after thirteen days of starvation Edward Fleming was able to "gaff" the rope into the dory while Peter made it fast. Then the boat was gently hauled up to the ship's side and Edward was assisted up to her deck, where he fell in a dead faint as he set foot thereon and realised that he was safe at last. His brother had to be hoisted on board, and he, too, collapsed at the realisation of the end of danger.

The rescuing ship was the barque *Jessie Morris*, Captain Farley, laden with coal from North Shields for Quebec, and then off Cape Race. At first it looked as if the unfortunate castaways must surely die. They were indeed pitiful objects. Their big bodies fearfully emaciated and their feet and hands swollen to twice the natural size. Their clothing had to be cut from their bodies, and the removal of their boots showed how horribly frosted their feet were. Their legs and most of their bodies had turned nearly black. Though it was Monday afternoon when they

were rescued, it was not until Wednesday morning that Edward Fleming opened his eyes and tried to speak. But his tongue and throat were so swollen that he could not articulate, and after several efforts he fainted again. Peter Fleming regained consciousness later, but it was Thursday night before they could tell of the horrors of their dreary voyage.

There is no lack on the Banks of stories of quick acts of heroism or tales of suffering as intense if not so long drawn out as that which the Flemings underwent. Deeds of self-sacrifice on the part of these fishermen are of such common occurrence that actions which should be rewarded with medals are passed over with scarcely a newspaper paragraph. One of the most inspiring of "Bank" stories is the adventure of

Thomas Neil and James Hynes. It was on June 17, 1898, when the two men were engaged at their trawls that a fog shut down which cut them off from their vessel. Then a sea arose which overturned their dory. They clambered upon the top of their boat, and there began a long and desperate struggle for their lives. It was in the early afternoon that the squall struck them, and the hours passed slowly till night came on and darkness added its horrors to the situation. The waves drenched them as the swell struck their little craft, and the chilling cold was intensified by their inaction. They were immersed to their waists in water the whole time, and their position was terribly insecure, for they dared not move for fear of again upsetting the boat. The dreary night passed into a



THE STUFF OF WHICH HEROES ARE MADE.



cheerless morning. Hynes, exhausted from his vigil—they had had no food since early the morning before—and seeing no ship in sight, lost his grip and tumbled off the boat. Neil at once slipped down to his aid, and the dory, released from his grasp, sped away on the crest of a wave. To let it escape meant death for both of them, therefore Neil had to turn and swim after it, shouting to Hynes to rouse himself and keep afloat till he returned. He caught the boat, towed it back, and helped Hynes to climb up on it again, scrambling up on it himself afterwards. A few hours later Hynes, who had grown very weak, slipped off again, and Neil had to repeat the difficult and dangerous operation of replacing him, though this time he had secured a rope around his own waist to prevent the boat from escaping. Hynes was so helpless that he could give little or no aid, and it is easy to understand what a heroic act it was for Neil to struggle in the water with the log-like form of his despairing companion, trying to shove him to a position of even partial security upon the bottom of the skiff. The great risk was that if in their struggles they disturbed the boat's position she might be swamped and then sink. But this danger was avoided, and Hynes was eventually stretched along the flat bottom of the skiff. He was too numb to hold himself there, and Neil had to cut off the stern-fast and lash him to the plug strap, all the while steadying the boat with one hand while he worked with the other, and treading water to keep himself afloat. Even then there was no room for himself on the dory's bottom except on the very point of her forefoot, and there he had to balance himself until help came to them at evening, after they had been twenty-seven hours afloat. Then the schooner *Mermaid* descried the skiff and bore down upon them. The two men were so far gone when they were rescued that the schooner hurried back to

St. Johns to place them in a hospital, where they lay several weeks before recovering their strength. Neil, seasoned veteran that he was, suffered no permanent ill-effects from this adventure, but Hynes' constitution was so undermined that he has never been able to "bank" since then. It would be difficult to surpass this adventure as an example of truest heroism. Neil, though exhausted by cold and exposure, twice risked his life in these most desperate circumstances to save his comrade. Moreover, Neil was a married man, with a young family dependent upon him, while Hynes was unmarried.

Only a week later, during a furious gale on the Banks, Henry George, one of the crew of the Newfoundland schooner *Pioneer*, was swept overboard by a wave. A comrade, Joseph Mooney, grabbed a bait plank as a support and sprang after him. Cumbered though he was with his oilskins and sea boots, Mooney first worked off his footgear and then his coat, and swam for his chum. George was floating unconscious on the surface of the water, having been thrown against the bulwark and hurt as he was flung over the side. After a long struggle Mooney reached him and gripped him by the collar with one hand, while with the other he held the frail plank in position between them. In this perilous plight the two men remained for three hours, until the schooner was able to beat back to them. The sea was running mountains high, and it was feared a dory would not live in it. To lessen the risk for the skiff and the men in the water, the schooner had to be run down almost sheer upon the latter, and then a dory with two men in it was launched bodily by a mighty heave by the rest of the crew, and in the "lull" created under the sheltered lea of the craft, the rescue was soon accomplished. George had not recovered consciousness, and lay like a log. Mooney was at the last gasp. He



" AFTER THEY HAD BEEN TWENTY-SEVEN HOURS AFLOAT."

*Drawn by M. J. Burns.*



had not only suffered the buffeting of the waves and the chill of the cold, but beside the effort of keeping his comrade on the plank, he found that the board could not support both their weights, and consequently he had to swim himself most of the time. He fainted when he was dragged into the boat, but his grip was so tight on his companion's collar that his fingers had to be pried open with a marlin-spike.

In most of the stories of the Banks the two men who make a dory's crew are cast away together and help and succour each other during their hardship. Occasionally one man is left alone to work out his own rescue under the most appalling conditions. The experience of Howard Blackburn, in January, 1889, is one of the most thrilling of all the known tales of the fisheries. Blackburn and Thomas Walsh, shipmates on the Gloucester schooner *Grace Fears*, were out in a dory fishing when a slight squall came up and increased rapidly into a blizzard. They hurried toward the schooner, but the wind veered and swept them to leeward. They had to anchor their dory and wait three hours until the storm passed. Then, as it was dark, they saw the schooner's light a good way off.

They tried again to reach her, but could not make head against the gale, so anchored once more and threw over the fish to make the boat ride easier. Towards morning another squall swept the sea, and when it ceased the schooner had vanished, driven from her moorings by the tempest.

After daybreak they decided to row to land, about sixty miles, and manfully settled to the task. But the gusty weather kept them back, for to row in a squall meant death. So they made a "drag" out of trawl tubs, which kept the dory head on, while, half frozen and despairing, they bailed her out. Blackburn, in fitting the drag, removed his mittens to work more easily, and lost them overboard. Soon the cruel frost-

bite attacked him, and both hands got burnt and partly helpless. No more appalling situation than this could be conceived. Even with comfortable clothes and ample food the chance of surviving in such a frail skiff would be little enough, but with frozen hands and no food or water their case was indeed desperate.

But Blackburn was cast in an heroic mould. When his stiffening fingers warned him of what was about to happen, he pressed both hands around the oars, holding them there for hours, until they were frozen into the shape of the handles. In that way he could still have a leverage with them on the paddles, for it was only by keeping the power of rowing that they could hope to escape. Walsh then drew off Blackburn's boots, and removed his stockings to cover his frozen hands, and thus they spent their second night, with the boat at the drag, and the waves freezing on her so that they had to hammer the ice off, else its weight would have swamped her. Walsh collapsed this night, his mind wandered and he raved for water, and licked the salty crust on the boat's gunwale. Helpless to relieve him, Blackburn had to do double duty in clearing the ice off the boat.

Next morning Walsh died. Before the end he regained consciousness and begged Blackburn not to throw him overboard but to bury him on land. The brave fellow promised to do this, and also to send messages to his friends.

Blackburn was on the ocean in a little boat, hungry and alone with a frozen corpse. He moved the body to the stern and took the mittens off the lifeless hands, to protect his own, which were, however, so swollen and distorted that he could not get the mittens on. When the sea moderated he rowed shoreward again. His hands were like wood, devoid of feeling, but the curve in which they had frozen gave him adequate leverage, though the friction wore

away the frozen flesh and skin, which crumbled off like powder. Still he toiled along, sighting land at dusk, but so far off that he put out his drag again for the night. Fearing to sleep lest the cruel cold should still his heart, though terribly weary with the day's arduous toil, he had to crawl about all night to keep up his circulation.

Next morning, with renewed energy, he fell to the oars again. But, enfeebled

a house and a jetty, at which he moored his boat. Then he dragged his feeble limbs to the hut, hoping for succour. But the hut was empty; it was only the summer station of fisherfolk who retired up the river for the winter. Some rude furniture and an old net were stored in it, but not a morsel of food. Still, for a man who had not quenched his thirst for five days, there was pure, fresh snow, which he ate with relish. He



"HE BEGGED BLACKBURN . . . TO BURY HIM ON LAND."

*Drawn by M. J. Burns.*

from hunger, cold, sleeplessness, and the pain of his frozen hands, he could not make much progress, and another night saw him lying to behind his invaluable sea-anchor.

The next day was Tuesday, and it broke calm and clear, with bright sun and smooth sea. But for this the weary, crippled mariner could never have reached the shore. As it was, it took him until sunset to get there, and the flesh of his hands was literally chafed to the very bones by his labour at the oars. Entering a river mouth, he saw

lay on the net, more dead than alive, to try to sleep, but the pain of his frozen hands and swollen feet made it impossible.

The sixth morning he faced another misfortune. His dory had pounded on a rock during the night, damaging her side, so that she filled and now lay level with the waves, with poor Walsh's body in its icy shroud afloat in her. With incredible difficulty, and using his teeth for lifting when his helpless hands would not serve, Blackburn tried to raise the body in his arms to place it on the



wharf, but his foot slipped on the icy ledge, and his burden fell into the surf, and sank to the bottom some twelve feet below the surface. There he had to let it remain, resolving, however, to recover it as soon as possible. Then he freed his boat, filled a trawl-tub with snow to eat, and started to row east, having seen some vessels in that direction on the previous evening. Two other ships appeared as he worked along and he tried desperately to get to them, but his strength was exhausted and his boat leaking. So, worn out from his exertions and disheartened at his failure, he put back into the river again for the shelter of the hut during the night.

When he re-entered "Little River," the solitude and desolation almost unmanned him. His condition was terrible, for he had now been six days without food. Suddenly he heard a gunshot up the stream, and rowing toward the sound with his remaining strength, he descried just at nightfall a little settlement. He feared that this, too, might prove empty, but though the river's current was swift and laden with ice, masses large enough to sink his battered dory, he persevered until he reached the shore, where in the moonlight he saw some people waiting for him. Then he realised that the worst of his direful adventure was past. Briefly, he told his thrilling story, and they offered him food and shelter. But he first insisted that some of the men should row out after Walsh's body. The body was recovered, and, when spring opened the roads, it was taken to Burgeo, some miles away, and laid in the churchyard there. Blackburn was housed with Francis Lishman, one of the fishermen. A sparing meal helped him for the ordeal that he had to face, that of drawing the frost from his feet and hands before the heat induced by a fire brought the mortification, which in some serious cases results in death. He soaked his hands and feet in strong, cold brine, which slowly extracted the

frost, though it caused him excruciating torture. Then poultices of flour and cod-oil were applied as no other remedies were procurable. Mortification was staved off in this way, but as no surgeon was there to amputate, all the fingers on both hands and the thumbs to the first joints rotted off by the slow process of dry gangrene, and it was two months before he was rid of the last of them. Blackburn also lost three toes, the heel of the right foot, and two toes from the left, the remainder being so maimed as to leave him a cripple ever since.

News of his plight was later conveyed to the American Consul at St Johns, who sent him necessities from time to time. But the winter was severe and communication infrequent, while Little River, being none too well off, was poorly able to assist a helpless guest. They would all have perished from hunger, but that in March the sealing steamer *Nimrod*, of St. Johns, got jammed in the ice near there, and some of the crew, walking ashore over the floe, learned of the need of the village and had a supply of food sent to them. Blackburn spent his 24th birthday here on February 17th, and it was not until April 23rd that he could get removed to Burgeo, where he joined a boat, which transferred him to St. Pierre-Miquelon, to an American "banker," that carried him back to Gloucester.

Here his story had preceded him, and sympathy was general. A fund was raised to start him in business as a tobacconist. This venture was a success, for every fisherman dealt with him, and within a year he returned to the charities of the town a sum equal to that given him. He also helped the people of Little River substantially, and one winter when the fishery failed there, he chartered a schooner, loaded her with provisions, and sent her to their relief.

Another extraordinary feat of courage and coolness was performed by John

Clements, who was cast away in a dory only last summer off the Labrador Banks. Clements was one of the crew of the schooner *Protector*. On July 21st, when the *Protector* was just beyond the straits of Belle Isle, Clements and George Johnson, another of the crew, were out in a dory together. The fog shut down suddenly and shut them off from their ship. They rowed about for hours trying to find her, as there were no other craft in that region and land was thirty miles away. When night came on they determined to make for the coast before the polar current swept them south. They were without food or water, and the ocean was filled with icebergs, which constantly menaced the little craft as they sped by in the mist.

The morning came at last with a bright sun and breeze, and they set a sail for a few hours. But a storm followed, and by nightfall the boat was half full of water and lying to a drag, the rain pouring down and both men

bailing their hardest. As the third night approached without sight of land, Johnston lost heart and abandoned the oars. Clements held on until his mate became delirious and threatened to jump overboard.

Then Clements, being the stronger, overpowered Johnston and tied him up in the bottom of the boat, an operation which, from their struggles, nearly swamped her. Clements believed that land was near, and that he could save them both. His intuition was correct, for next morning it was in sight. After daybreak Clements got out the oars again, and at noon reached the shore, landing in a little cove. Here he found a brook, and gave Johnston a refreshing draft, besides a meal of fresh roots and berries. This restored the latter, and Clements cut him loose. Then they started to coast south, and in the afternoon were picked up by a Newfoundland schooner and taken to Domino, a fishing station on Labrador, where they were provided with every comfort.



THE ICE FLOE OFF THE BANKS.



## YANTO, THE WASTER

By JOSEPH KEATING

*Illustrated by R. A. Richards*

THE night before, in the "Collier's Arms," Yanto, the haulier—an elaborate composite of good and evil—prophesied disaster.

"I tell you straight," said he, handing the pint to the next man whose turn came to drink from it, "they're drivin' into Jerry's deep in the old workings, and the old workings is full of watter. We'll be drowndid—all of us—like rats."

As Yanto, before his mother died, studied these things—she wanted to see her son a manager—no one felt justified in calling him a fool for hinting at such a horrible possibility.

The next day they wondered why they ever doubted him.

About noon the excellent collier who "drove on" Prince's Level, in the Glamorgan Company's No. 2 pit, found the coal suddenly become soft.

"Funny!" he exclaimed.

Prince—being a collier—did not frequent the "Collier's Arms." He left such places to scamps of hauliers—like Yanto: so he knew nothing of the haulier's prognostications.

Prince put his lamp close to the coal.

"Oh, *Arglwyd* (Lord)!" he shouted, very much alarmed, "water's comin' through."

He called to his boy down the lower side. The boy, frightened, scurried up.

Even before the boy reached his father the coal in the upper side burst; the water came breaking through. The boy screamed and ran back through the face of the coal down the lower side. The water followed him; but he kept ahead. His father tried to run to him. But the whole face of the coal came tearing away from its place and water filled the open road.

For many days, it would seem, only a thin barrier of coal remained to hold

back the water. Now it broke through in a yellow roaring flood, big enough to drown every man, boy and horse in the whole district.

Prince leaped back, and ran. The water rushed after him. His little light threw back long rays of red upon the yellow death. The water now filled the roadway. It reached up the sides; it tore away the rough walling stones; it knocked out the timber, which floated with the destroyer; it drew down the top, and big stones splashed as they fell. It went after the man and the little light—roaring and muddy, like a torrent rushing down the mountain side after a storm.

Prince threw a frightened look back. He could not hope to keep ahead of the flood.

He knew every turn of the workings; and he thought of a way of escape. A little way out a road turned to the left—upwards. He felt that he could reach it, and perhaps evade the water for a time. But thoughts of the boy interfered with this plan.

His light flashed upon an opening on his right hand.

This road went downwards—they called it a heading because it came upwards from the main road.

It led to the lower workings and the double parting—the distributing junction. If he took that road he knew he could get to his boy and take care of him.

With that thought, he leaped into the opening. A door stood at the top to guide the air current down to his own working place. Well aware that this door opened *against* him, he thought that if he could reach it, and get inside, the door itself might hold back the water for a time.

As he reached the door the flood

reached his heels. The great volume of water broke into every opening seeking escape, in a manner, from its own overpowering rush.

Prince pulled at the door; it opened a little way; then the flood rushed against it and closed it with a crash, before the man could get through.

The water swirled around him. He screamed and held up his lamp to keep it alight. The water rose and drowned the little light; the darkness of the pit followed. Then came the greater darkness; and poor Prince never saw his boy again.

Water filled the place—from the tram rails on the ground to the timber across the top.

The plank door with its framework of sturdy wood pillars, and side-walls of compact, well-beaten turf, held back the water. It could not get down that way.

So our prophet Yanto going down the heading behind his horse, with his lamp swinging on the corner of a full "dram" of coal—the last tram filled by Prince and his boy, whom Yanto last "hitched"—went on singing his Welsh love-song.

His swinging lamp threw grotesque shadows of horse, tram, and haulier over the sides and roof.

The horse kicked up a thick black dust, and made Yanto cough. He broke off his song in the middle of a line to resent this.

"Warrior," said he, "you're the clumsiest, laziest—— Pick up your big feet. Come up, *yr hên ceffyl!*"

As the road ran down, and their direction went downwards, too, Warrior could not "come up." But he took the spirit of the paradox, and, after a toss of the head and a wild gleam of the eye—a look that wondered whether corporal punishment should follow—enlivened his pace, and stirred up a thicker dust than ever. He swished his tail vigorously, and the black, glossy hair gleamed in the lamplight. His harness jingled, and the tram rumbled; and to this ac-

companiment Yanto sang his love-song as he sat on the "iron" behind Warrior.

If the door at the top gave way to the pressure of the torrent, the love-song would end with a flourish and a tragedy—as a love-song should. And Marrgat, of the "Collier's Arms," the wench with Celtic black eyes, dark-red cheeks, and ample bosom, who preferred serving pints to Yanto than to any other scamp, would cry bitterly, hiding her face in her apron.

Then Yanto noticed in the roadway, between the tram rails, something which flashed under his light. Yanto stared down at it.

"Water," said he, reflectively. "Now, where is *she* coming from?"

From under the rumbling tram the water trickled. It travelled a little faster than the horse, and Warrior's hoofs began to splash in it, while Yanto's light flashed on it.

"Oh!" quietly said Yanto, in the tone of a man accepting a miracle as quite an ordinary matter.

He could not know that this little stream represented the bulk of water which escaped through the door at the top when Prince tried to go that way.

"Come up!" said he to Warrior.

He could think of nothing more apt at the moment.

Warrior, annoyed by the splashing, willingly hastened. The increased speed bespattered Yanto with mud, and the mud deepened his perplexity. Down ran horse and tram, with Yanto on the iron. They reached the beginning of the short turn which joined the heading to the main road, and Yanto saw something ahead which gleamed in his light like a wall of flame.

"Whoa!" he shouted, and leaped cleverly off into the side.

Owing to the speed, Warrior could not stop, and horse and tram rushed into the water that filled the bottom road from floor to roof. It had gone around Prince's road, and come back



through every opening into the main road, from which the heading branched.

Yanto found himself in it up to the waist.

"*Arglwyd!*" said he, spluttering and gasping. Half-swimming and half-wading, he worked his way back up the heading to dry ground. In the dark—the water put out his light before he could guard against it—he heard Warrior squealing and splashing.

"He'll be drownid," said Yanto.

Then he shouted to Warrior in the familiar terms:—

"Back, *y ceffyl!* Stand back!"

He could tell by the creaking iron that the horse tried to obey. The harness jingled as he strove to force the tram back up the hill. But the slope made that impossible, and Warrior grew frantic. He could not go back, so he went on. And Yanto heard him floundering in the water struggling against drowning, and squealing with terror. Then the struggling ceased.

"Poor old Warrior!" said Yanto. "He's drownid—an' I'm in a nice pickle, ain't I?"

No one disputed it. The blackness and stillness around him remained undisturbed.

"Yes, a nice infernal pickle," he added. "I know what's happened. I'll bet you what you like they've knocked into Jerry's Deep an' let the water in."

None of the imps of darkness around him seemed inclined to come forward to take the bet. Either they were "in the know," or gambling was forbidden in shadowland.

"I wonder if I can get out through Prince's road?" said Yanto.

He knew he must be swift; the water would soon rise and fill the headings.

But he did not get flustered. He went calmly up the incline. The darkness did not hinder his movements. He knew the road—knew every yard of the workings.

His outstretched hand touched the door. He pushed against it, trying to

open it. It did not move. He heard hissing noises; the escaping of water through little cracks in the door.

"Oh!" said Yanto; "tons of water against her. I'm blocked by there, then."

He thought a minute.

"Come, you!" said he. The phrase means: "I accept the situation just exactly as it is."

Then he turned back. With his left hand thrust out as a feeler, he scraped his way down the heading. Half-way down he stopped.

"It ought to be just about here," said he.

He raised his foot from the tram rail, and cautiously moved into the side. His hand touched the rough walling.

"No," said he; "a bit too far. If I don't get out of here quick," he added, "the water from top and bottom will meet, and I'll have too much to drink. A drunkard's death is awful, mind you."

Yanto laughed. He seemed to take a sardonic pleasure in the situation.

He turned back, with his left hand feeling the side. Presently the hand found nothing to touch; it sank into space, and Yanto, not quite prepared for this, lurched sideways and stumbled. He laughed again.

"Here she is," said he. "If they left the road down, a feller could follow the rails."

He went into the old disused stall road. It led in towards the coal.

"I'd rather it led *out*," said Yanto. "But I can't have everything my own way, I s'pose."

Stones, fallen timber, and rubbish obstructed the way. Stumbling, and swearing every time he stumbled, Yanto covered the ground with remarkable speed for a man travelling in utter darkness. Dante took much longer to get from place to place in Hades.

His foot kicked against something yielding. The touch sent a thrill over Yanto.

"Who is it, I wonder?" said he.

He bent down, and his hands touched a human body.

"Is he dead?" wondered Yanto.

He passed his hands over the body.

"It's a boy!"

He shook him vigorously, and a sound came from the boy. So Yanto repeated the shaking until consciousness came back, and the lad sat up in the roadway.

"Ain't you Prince's boy?" asked Yanto.

"Yes."

"Where's your father?"

Young Prince whimpered.

"I don't—know."

"Where's your lamp?"

"I ran away without it when the water came."

Yanto knew the rest. The boy got lost in the dark, and frightened himself into a faint.

"Well, come with me, wassy (lad)," said Yanto. "The water'll soon be in this way."

The boy began to cry.

"How can us get out?"

("Out" always means home in the pits.)

"Never mind that for a minute. Let's get away from the water. Let's get into Jimmy's heading. We might do something worth there."

He took the boy's hand. They went a little way on until Yanto's out-thrust arm once more poked itself into nothingness.

"Here it is, wassy."

"There's a light," shouted the boy.

Yanto turned to look up the roadway.

"Five of um," said he. "They're in the same trap as us. Hoy-y!" he shouted.

"Hoy-y!"

The five lights shook wildly, because



"OH, ARGLWYD! WATER'S COMIN' THROUGH."

those who carried them came rushing down the hill.

"They're runnin' well," remarked Yanto, laughing. "But they'd better not go far at that rate, or they'll run into the pool at the bottom and be drown'd like poor old Warrior."



"What — is poor old Warrior drownid?" demanded young Prince, suddenly.

"Ahy."

"Oh, poor old Warrior!" said the boy with overwhelming tenderness, and he began to cry; for horses and boys in the pits like one another very much.

The lights came rushing down. The five men came abreast with Yanto and the boy.

"Hoy!" said Yanto.

"Hoy!" they replied without stopping.

"Hold on," said Yanto, catching the first one.

"Come on, come on!" they all cried. "Don't stop. The water's come through Prince's place."

"Ahy, ahy," returned Yanto, easily. "An' it's waiting for you at the bottom of Jimmy's place."

"Is it there already?" they asked, horrified. "Then we're shut in for ever."

"Let's try another road," said Yanto. "Give me your light, Lewis—I'll lead you." He reached for the lamp in the hand of the man he held.

"No!" shouted Lewis, drawing back: "I'm going to try the main road. The water is not all there yet."

"I tell you it drown'd my horse at the bottom of the next heading."

"What does a waster of a haulier like you know? I'll try my luck!" roared the man, desperately. And he broke away and ran down the heading.

The other four seemed inclined to try their luck in the same way. They tried to push by.

"Don't be — fools," said Yanto, calmly. "You'll never see Lewis again."

The sarcasm in his tone made for conviction. The men stopped.

"What you goin' to do?" they asked, with their lights up to his face.

"Who'll give me a light?"

"Here, Yanto."

One of the men put a lamp into his hand.

"Ah—somebody's got a bit of sense

then," remarked Yanto, as if highly gratified by the discovery. "Come on with me, Rees," he added to the man.

With the light he took the lead and started up the heading. His right hand held the lamp; his left still held young Prince; and the boy clung to him with perfect faith in Yanto's omnipotence. Rees followed with equal confidence. But the other three held back, doubting.

"You can come if you like," Yanto shouted back by way of invitation.

"But what can you do going that way?"

"I don't promise nothin'."

"But tell us—tell us," they pleaded. "What's your plan?"

*"Get behind the water an' see if we can't scheme into the return of the upcast."*

A revelation of the other world would cause less excitement among the three doubters than did Yanto's words. The men ran up and joined him, following him with childlike eagerness and delight, talking—babbling—as if they had just had an invitation to heaven.

The leader laughed. He drew the boy level with him, and bent down to say quietly in his ear:—

"I knew they'd come. Now we'll make these beauties work for their escape—and ours."

The boy laughed, because Yanto seemed to consider the matter quite an excellent joke.

They came to an opening on the right-hand side. The junction of rails shone under the four lights. Yanto walked past the black opening, but Rees stopped.

"A light!" he cried.

Yanto came back a step or two.

A light came rushing towards them from the right-hand road.

"Oh, p'raps it's my father!" shouted young Prince, in a burst of boyish joy.

Yanto drew the boy close to him, and felt the pathos of it, because he guessed the truth about the lad's father.

"No," said he; "it's only someone lost his way."

"Hoy!" came from the light.

"Hoy!" the others answered.

The light leaped in amongst them. From the clothes of the man who carried it water dripped.

"I was just drownid!" said he, excitedly, as the others thrust their lamps into his face to identify him.

"How is that?" asked Yanto.

"The water turned me back. It's comin' through after me."

The others expressed alarm.

"Oh!" said Yanto. "Then it'll soon fill this place, too. We're just in time to get the upper side of it. It'll meet Lewis when he's running up after us. I was afraid we should never see him again. Come on!"

He went briskly up the heading. The newcomer eagerly took his place at the tail of the others, and the seven entombed human beings, with their five lights swinging disconsolately, marched in Indian file through the little door of hope towards a very doubtful chance of getting out of their trouble. They, however, now threw themselves entirely into the care of Yanto. He saved them once—they thought of their friend Lewis—so he could save them again. If he didn't—well, he should answer for it.

Yanto stopped before a door which opened from him.

"Hush!" said he.

They stopped. Silence of death fell upon them all.

"No water comin' through," said Yanto.

He put his hand to the door. He pushed gently. The door yielded. It opened slightly.

The lights sent yellow rays into the black space.

"No sign of water—firrst-class!"

He flung the door wide and went through. The others followed. The last man gave the plank door a push. It closed with a hollow bang, and the black dust of the road, disturbed by the rush of air, rose up around the men's lights in red rings.

A little way on, Yanto turned to the right, going by this route towards the heading from which he first came. But he did not go far in that direction. A road turned to the left, going *down* hill now, in consequence of a fault or break in the coal seam. Earthquakes make ugly changes down below as well as making the face of the world pock-marked. A brattice door stood at the top of the road.

"Well, there's sure to be some sign of water here," said Yanto, putting his hand to the door. He pushed it open.

The lamplight glittered on a wet road, like sunshine on a mud beach when the tide goes out. It looked as if the water in its first inrush had risen to the door, and then fell back to the lower workings.

"Now we can cut into Prince's place, and get *behind* the water," said Yanto; and he began to sing. He took up his Welsh love-song from the point where the water first interrupted him by drowning Warrior. And the boy sang with him; because, hearing "Prince's place" mentioned as their destination, he thought Yanto intended taking him straight to his father.

Yanto went steadily down a little way.

"In this road," said he, turning to the right.

"That's the way I came, I think," blurted out young Prince.

The road, sides, and top glistened in the lamplight, and water dripped from the timber across the roof and trickled down the side-posts as rain does on tree trunks after a shower. They came to a tram half-full of coal.

"I wonder did Dan get out all right?" said Yanto.

"I wonder?" echoed the others.

They passed the tram. The coal in its bed stopped them. Yanto turned to the right, went through the face for some time. Then he came to an open road. They stood in Prince's place.

"Here's where it broke through."



The men, with much excitement and many exclamations examined the great gap in the coal. Everything dripped yellow water.

"It's all flowed into the lower roads," said Yanto, "and blocked the way out. Come on—try my way."

"Where's my father?" demanded the boy. His father's dead body lay in the mire not fifty yards away.

"Waiting for you on top," said Yanto, lying with ease for the good of the boy's health. "You ought to have gone with him."

"I couldn't—indeed," stammered the lad.

"Most likely you'll get it when he catches you," added Yanto.

This convinced young Prince. The others, mercifully, held their tongues.

They went back along the track of the water. They came to a road branching upwards to the left.

"Up here?" asked Rees.

"I hope not," Yanto returned. "That means having to cut through. I want the next road."

They went on about thirty yards. They came to a road on their right hand. Prince's drowned body lay there. They sagged on. Yanto, leading, came to a sheet of water which flashed into golden flames under the lamps. He stopped. The water rolled sluggishly towards him and rose under his feet.

"Oh," said he, with his careless inflection. He apostrophised the water. "Comin' back, arre you?"

"What?" cried his companions, with angry surprise.

"The worl'd is turnin' upside down I s'pose, and the water's havin' a run round for the fun of it," explained Yanto. But he made a grimace to himself that expressed neither fun nor indifference, and he shook his fist at the water.

"What's the meaning——?" asked the others, in a fluster.

"It's the reeyaction," said he. "We've bin a long time gettin' here, and the

water's comin' back to say she's sorry for intrudin' so 'bruptly."

"Don't make sport," said a grave voice from the tail.

"An' can't we go on to the return?"

"No, indeed," Yanto answered, with too much earnestness—like a boy promising his teacher not to waste his time any more.

"What can us do now?" the men asked, in a panic.

"Best us can," said Yanto, laughing.

"Shame!" they cried. "Mockin' us like this."

"When we might all die in here."

"They are only pretendin'," said Yanto, soothingly, to the boy, who clung to him terror-struck when the men spoke of death. Yanto's declaration made him laugh. The boy believed in the man to an alarming extent.

But the others held Yanto responsible for their lives.

"You brought us here," they cried. "Get us out of it."

"Oh!" said Yanto. "I'm God Almighty, am I?"

"More like the devil himself!" blurted out one of the men, under the shock of Yanto's enquiry.

The others laughed at the incongruity—a little wildly and hysterically, perhaps, yet they laughed—and the ring of their laughter among the hollows and the timber did them good. The water rippled with the sound of it. With their laughter the water became ruffled, and the men themselves unruffled. And in good-humoured remonstrance one said:—

"Now, Yanto, *machgen i*, what's the next move?"

He made no answer, but turned back, and led them to the road just passed. They followed his light up the incline. They came to a dead stop in the face of the coal.

"This old place is worrked out. There's no cut," said Rees, by which he meant they were in a lane without a turning.



"YOU'LL HAVE TO CUT THROUGH INTO JIMMY PREECE'S PLACE."

"You'll have to cut through into Jimmy Preece's place," said Yanto, coolly, as he examined the face of the coal with his lamp.

"What!" came a chorus of mingled doubt and faith. "Can we do it?"

"It's not far, I should think. When they stopped work here they left a pillar of coal—the surveyors said about twenty yarrrds. But they never know what they are talking about."

"Or they wouldn't have let Prince cut into Jerry's Deep," put in one of the men, furious.

"I reckon," Yanto said, his light still on the shining coal, "it's not ten yarrrds. Then from Jimmy Preece's old stall we can get into the return and go home, boys—in a couple of weeks," he added, dropping his voice, like a man who feels that his company will not care about the joke which he can't help making.

"Cut through the coal!" cried one. "How can we?"

Yanto turned and raised his light to the man's face.

"Do you want me to tell you how to breathe?" he asked. "You an' Rees go down to Prince's road an' the other places, and pick up what tools the water haven't washed away. An' be quick, or the water'll cut you off altogether, an' leave us here with nothin' to do but starve for a bit."

Nothing but swift obedience could follow this. Away they went. The others watched the two lights swinging, and growing smaller, till they vanished at the bottom of the road. The lights quickly reappeared, and the two men rejoined the others with mandrils, bars, wedges, and sledge-hammers. The clothes of the two dripped.

"We had to wade through it," said Rees.

"It's at the bottom of this road," added his friend.

"Rising up here, I s'pose?" said Yanto, calmly.



"Yes."

"Oh! Then you'll have to cut more coal in the next few hours than you've ever cut in your worthy lives. Now, tamp," said he to the men, meaning "hurry." They leaped to the coal.

Yanto organised them. He put two to cut, two to draw the loose stuff out of the way, and one to hold light.

"Change about when you want to," he added. "But cut only a hole big enough to crawl through. And mind, above all things, cut on the slant, to the right."

The work began briskly. He picked up four lamps out of the five, and deliberately extinguished them.

"Only one light you give us?" asked the man who held it.

"The oil 'on't hold for long," he answered. "If you burrn um all, they'll all go out. But if you burrn one at a time, they'll last longer. The wind is strong, and there's no gas, so we can light one from the other."

The men by the solitary light cut and hammered, literally for their lives; choking with the dust, shining with the sweat of their labour; trembling with their fear that the water would rise and drown them like rats in a hole. Yanto, after a mere glance at the operations, went back a little way to the place in the side of the road where he had put young Prince to rest. He found the boy lying back in the dust fast asleep, tired out with all the marching and counter-marching.

"Good lad," remarked Yanto, looking down at him. The faint rays of the lamp came back and touched the boy's face with gold. But he shivered in his sleep.

"It *is* cold," said Yanto. "The water is forcing all the air of the pit up to this road. I'll get some bedclothes for him."

He went to the men, picked up the clothes they had thrown off (they worked with bare bodies), came back, and put the shirts and waistcoats care-

fully over young Prince. (Among Yanto's many weaknesses you must put his affection for boys; and the more wicked the boy, the more he loved him.) Then Yanto lay down beside the sleeping lad and took him in his arms, and with the ring of the hammer and mandrills in his ears he went to sleep himself.

You will notice that in organising the cutting out operations Yanto left nothing for himself to do. Yanto, a real leader, hated real work; he used his brains, and left the labour of carrying out of his ideas entirely to lesser mortals. So while the others worked frantically for dear life, Yanto forgot all about the danger, and slept as peacefully as if in bed in his lodgings with no work next day to harass his slumber.

He woke at the sound of the boy crying. He sat up shivering in the cold, abnormally strong wind.

"What's up, wassy?" he inquired patiently.

"I'm hungry," sobbed the boy.

"Oh, you're hungry are you? Well, where do you think we're going to get any grub for you—before the shops are open?"

"I'm as hungry as—as anythin'," said the boy, crying more piteously.

Yanto grumbled.

"Well, I s'pose I must ask um to pull the shutters down somewhere," said he, rising.

He took up one of the dark lamps, went to the man who held the lighted one, and lit his own.

The men worked without a moment's stopping, like lost souls trying to cut their way out of hell. Yanto muttered something in a dissatisfied tone as he looked at the work.

"I'll have somethin' to say to um when I get back," said he to himself.

But, as if the mission in hand—that of getting something to eat for the boy—exceeded all other things in importance, away he went down the road with his lamp swinging its light on the rough



"WE'LL COME BACK WITH SOMETHING TO WRAP AROUND HIM."

stone sides and top. He felt certain of finding some scraps of bread in the victuals boxes left behind by the colliers in their rush to escape the water.

He came back soaking from head to foot. The water streamed from his hair, from his neckerchief, from every particle of his clothing. But under both armpits he carried a small tin box full of bread.

"I had a nice long swim for um," said he, putting down the lamp and opening a tin for the boy, who pounced on the food and seemed not at all surprised that Yanto could work such miracles as to produce dry bread and cheese under the most unfavourable conditions; while the wonder-worker himself did not seem to think it in the least strange that such a good-for-nothing like Yanto the haulier should go to so much trouble to please a mere lad.

The wind now blew up the road with terrific force. The water, after closing all other outlets, drove all the air up

this road with the fierceness of a gale. Yanto, wet through, shivered with the cold; his clothing clung to him as if he were swathed in ice-folds.

"I shouldn't be surprised if I ketch my death of cold," said he, laughing at himself, as he walked up in the dark towards where the men worked.

"Funny them blows sounds," he said, listening to the dull thuds that came to him from the "cut." "Seems as if they're just through."

"The water's risin' quick—not twenty yards away from us, now," said he, affably, as he joined the other five.

"Oh, *anwyl!*" they exclaimed, in consternation. And, under the horrible incentive, the two men then using the cutting tools picked and hammered harder than ever, as if the many hours of labour gave them vigour, instead of weakening them.

Yanto listened to the sounds of the blows carefully. They struck dull and heavy. He looked puzzled.

"Stop a bit," said he, very quietly.



## THE IDLER

"Stop!—with the water just on us?" cried the men.

"Stop, I tell you," said Yanto, still very quietly; "or, if I don't make a mistake, you'll be blowed to pieces up against the coal."

This alarmed them more than the water. They dropped their tools.

"Come out," said Yanto.

The four men shuffled back. Sweat poured from them, in spite of the intense cold in which they worked.

Yanto took the light, and examined the face of the coal. In front and on the right it shone under the light. But on the left side he noticed that the coal wore a feathery dull black look, and gave no reflection from the lamp rays.

"Ah," said he.

He touched it; the soft coal crumbled and fell like mould down to his feet.

He struck his knuckles softly against it; it sounded hollow.

"Ah," said he again.

He looked back at the men, who watched every one of his movements.

"Measure," said Yanto.

One man paced the length of the gap made.

"Six yards."

"Good goin'," remarked Yanto. "But you went too fast to do it right. I told you to slant to the right. You have slanted to the left."

"It cut easier that way."

"Oh! And was it easier to make the cut so big? You've made it big enough for a horse and dram to go through."

"It kept fallin'."

"Oh!"

"We've done our best."

"Oh, indeed!"

His tone wounded their feelings. One said, complainingly:—

"Anyhow, you didn't do much more."

"No, I s'pose. Only, *machgen i* (my boy), you've made this hole big enough to be my grave. Good job it isn't yours, too. I s'pose there was somethin' in the boy wakin' me up."

"What do you mean, Yanto?" they asked, bewildered.

"Light the other lamps from this one, and—keep back," answered he, once more sounding the coal on the left side.

They took the lamp from his hand. The wind blew so strong—they felt its unlifting pressure as if it were a solid power forcing itself upon them. With such a breeze no gas could exist; therefore, protecting the flame, they opened the lamp, and succeeded in lighting two of the others.

"Now," said Yanto, with his back to the coal at the extreme end of the cut, "the pillar wasn't so thick as anybody thought, and it was thinner on the left than anywhere, and nobody knew nothing 'bout that."

He stopped. They looked at this leader of theirs in silence. His tone now put into their hearts, strangely, a feeling of terror. The light from the three lamps shone straight in upon him, and the rays reflected from the coal behind him gave his head a golden halo.

Yanto had not forgotten the things of his student days—when his mother wanted to see her son a "maniger." She died, and so did the ambition she inspired. But some of the "things to be remembered" remained with him ever after; and he knew well what a rush of compressed air would do when it found an opening.

"The atmospheric pressure in this here headin'," said he, smiling at the sound of the opening phrase, "is enough to smash six big elephants, let alone six little men like you an' me. But, before I strike, one of you go back to that boy, and let him cling to him."

The hindmost man doubled back to the lad.

"And you others—cling fast to the sides—to anything—only hold on tight, or the wind will come through here like a big explosion and carry you off through this hole like dead leaves in a March wind."

The men threw themselves down, clutching at projecting stones and slips of coal in the sides.

"If you didn't make the hole so big, I'd stand a better chance," said Yanto. "Now I must take all the risks. But I s'pose the leader must lead in the risks like in everythin' else. I wonder," he added whimsically, "will Marrgat of 'The Collier's' like me when she sees me next?"

He took up a mandril. With the lightest possible blow he touched the coal. The point of the tool went through into space. He drew it back. The wind shrieked through the aperture. The men clung tighter to the stones and buried their faces in the dust, terrified by the screaming wind. Yanto struck the coal again. He struck again—(may the Lord have mercy on poor Yanto!) A crashing, shrieking,

tearing sound followed the blow. The outrush of compressed air tore away the whole side of the coal, and smashed it into a million pieces against the opposite wall of the road of escape these men sought. A human body added to the heap of *débris*.

When the fury spent itself the five men rose and came fearfully to the gap. They examined it with their lamps.

"Where is he?"

One crept over the ragged edge at the bottom and looked around. He came back, and the others held their lights to his terror-stricken face.

First he said, whispering:—

"We can get into the main road from here and be home in an hour."

Next he said, whispering still:—

"We'll come back with something to wrap around him. We can't carry him. He is all mangled."

## AT THE LAST

By W. H. OGILVIE

ONE pebble on the beach, my love,  
That will not shine for me;  
One rosebud out of reach, my love;  
One goal can never be;  
One hope that will not wake,  
One grief that will not die,  
One kiss I may not take,  
My love,  
From dear lips that deny!

There is one grave that waits, my love;  
One bier that shall be borne  
Beyond the thrice-chained gates, my love,  
Of your relentless scorn;  
Beyond the doubt and fret,  
Where all vain yearnings cease,  
I shall at last forget,  
My love,  
And find at last my peace!



## THE PARSON'S BRUSH

By ALFRED STODDART

IF the doctor had not ordered the Rev. Frederick Saunders to take horseback riding for his liver; if the Rev. Frederick Saunders had not determined to purchase a horse; and if he had not by chance gotten hold of old Alexander—in his time one of Ralph Goring's best and staunchest hunters; if he hadn't come along just as—but why indulge in these useless speculations? The doctor *did* prescribe horseback riding for the rector of St. James. The rector did, after due deliberation, make up his mind to purchase a saddle horse, and the animal which he acquired from William Stobbs, the principal horse dealer in Meadowthorpe, was no other than the redoubtable Alexander, who had carried his old master in the first flight through many a bruising run. As for the rest it would be best to begin at the beginning.

The Rev. Frederick Saunders was about the only man, within twenty miles of Meadowthorpe, who was opposed to fox hunting. True, there were a few farmers who made a great fuss about their young crops being ridden over and their fences being damaged; but they only did this as a pretext to enable them to collect large bills from the club for their injured property. There were around Meadowthorpe so many farmers who would scorn to accept a shilling of such money, that these few were compelled to talk against the sport to keep themselves in countenance.

The Rev. Frederick Saunders's motives, however, were more unselfish. He considered fox hunting cruel, in the first place, and a vain waste of time in the second, and there were other counts in his indictment.

Under these circumstances it may seem strange that the Rev. Saunders should purchase a hunter for a saddle horse, but the fact of the matter was that he had very little choice. Then, too, he got Alexander at a great bargain.

Indeed, there were not many horses around Meadowthorpe that were not hunters, more or less. All the horses in harness looked as if they didn't quite belong there. If you came down there from Saturday till Monday, the chances were largely in favour of your friend meeting you with a giddy young timber topper, reduced for the time being to the painful necessity of going between the shafts of a dog-cart—treatment which the animal seems to resent most emphatically.

"Rather fresh," you observe to your friend, as the horse does a few steps of a cake walk on his hind legs before leaving the station.

"Second time in harness," gesticulates your friend, as his whip swishes through the air and descends upon the horse's flanks. "But he's quiet as a kitten," he adds, as the animal starts off with a bolt that almost parts the trace leathers.

No doubt he is as quiet as a kitten, but you have rather a bad quarter-of-an-hour getting home. He nearly jumps out of his skin every time he touches the shafts, and your friend bustles him down hill at a frightfully reckless pace, because he does not know what the consequences will be when he feels the weight of the cart. Oh, yes! of course he's as quiet as a kitten, but the sight of your friend's house is a welcome one, and you willingly concur in his opinion, that perhaps it would "be better to drive right around to the stable." You are both

thoroughly aware that your friend could now no more stop the animal, who has had enough of this nonsense, than he could stop the Flying Scotsman.

But to return to the Rev. Frederick Saunders and Alexander. The former was assured by the horse dealer, Mr. Stobbs, that Alexander would make him just the sort of a saddle horse which he and his liver required—in other words, a good steady animal with a nice square trot—a little old for hunting perhaps but all the better for a saddle horse. And Mr. Stobbs priced him to the Rev. Saunders at the absurdly low figure of twenty-five guineas. Thirty-five had been his price all along, but then the Rev. Saunders was entitled to a clerical discount, and, besides, Mr. Stobbs wanted him to have the horse.

Why is it that horse dealers always want you to have horses which they also profess to dislike parting with? How can they want you to have them and still want them for themselves? It sounds rather paradoxical.

At all events, the transfer was effected, and so we find the Rev. Frederick Saunders on this crisp morning in February riding slowly along the road known as Church Lane, mounted on his new purchase. His costume, while not exactly clerical, was as much of a compromise to equestrian custom as he would permit himself. He was clothed, of course, in black, and wore a huge overcoat which Mrs. Saunders had insisted he should. This he found unpleasantly warm, and hence allowed it to fly open. His hat was a soft one of a peculiar pattern such as clergymen frequently wear, and he wore russet-leather leggings of pronounced newness.

His mind was dwelling upon the sermon which he intended to deliver on the following Sunday. He had determined to make one more valiant stand against the sin of fox hunting, which seemed to grip Meadowthorpe with a grasp of iron, and he was going over his arguments mentally.

Naturally his thoughts turned to his daughter, and the Rev. Saunders sighed. Alas, the girl, a dutiful child in all other things, had fallen in love with one of the enemy, young Bruce Harrington, than whom there was no more ardent fox hunter in or about Meadowthorpe. Bruce was devoted to Emily Saunders, but her father sternly refused to countenance anything like an engagement between them until Bruce finally in desperation sold his hunters and announced his intention of giving up fox hunting. Out of deference to the decided views of his future father-in-law, Bruce adhered manfully to this resolution, but it went hard with him when he chanced to see the hounds on their way to the meet, and it was said of him, that the sight of a pink coat brought tears to his eyes. Emily Saunders was almost heart-broken over this state of affairs. Torn between love for her sweetheart and her sense of duty to her father, she was indeed to be pitied.

The rector was relentless, however, and he was just steeling his mind to further endeavours in the anti-fox hunting field, when a chorus of short yelps and barks was borne to his ears by the wind, and he noticed Alexander pricking up his ears in an unwonted fashion. The noise increasing in volume, the rector suddenly became aware of its cause.

He had met the enemy. Caught him red-handed, or red-coated at all events, and he reined in Alexander to view the approaching cavalcade. Suddenly, the Rev. Frederick was startled to see a small red object jump down from a bank and cross the road, almost beneath his horse's nose, and the rector's kind heart was stirred with compassion, when presently a yelping stream of black, white and tan poured down the bank and over the road as the pack followed hot upon the scent.

Alexander's ears were cocked very high by this time and his nostrils were quivering with excitement, but the



rector was not thinking of him. "Shameful! Shameful!" he was saying to himself. "I *must* stop this thing."

So saying he chirped to Alexander, who was only too glad to take him at his word.

"Aha!" the old horse must have said to himself. "They will put me on the shelf, will they? My hunting days are over, are they? Well, we shall see."

Whereupon Alexander wheeled suddenly, and before the rector knew what he was doing, had popped over a low fence into the field where the hounds were running.

"Whoa, Alexander! Whoa!" cried the rector vociferously, but Alexander wouldn't whoa. The Rev. Saunders had been taken quite unawares when Alexander jumped the fence, and consequently it was only by a lucky chance that he made connections with the saddle when they landed. As it was, he lost one of his reins, which could only be regained by drawing the other one through his hand, and that was impossible at the moment. He was otherwise engaged in clinging to the saddle and in endeavouring to regain his left stirrup, which had also been lost in the shuffle.

Just at that moment, too, the huntsmen came into view, and Alexander, as he heard the clatter of hoofs crossing the road, was inspired to still greater exertions.

Great was the amazement of the members of the Meadowthorpe Hunt as the astonishing figure of their rector presented itself before them. His overcoat was flying wildly to the winds and his knees were pressed desperately against Alexander's shoulders, while he vainly attempted to recover the lost stirrup and rein. And all the while Alexander was galloping like mad.

Suddenly a fence loomed up before them, and the Rev. Saunders breathed something that was almost a prayer, as just in the nick of time his foot found a resting place in the lost stirrup. He had the good sense not to worry about

his reins at this juncture, but gave Alexander his head—or rather he gave him the other rein—and applied himself to holding on by the saddle pommel.

Alexander described a semicircle in the air and the rector did also—of somewhat greater radius but limited in this respect by his firm grasp upon his saddle tree. At all events he was still in the saddle when Alexander had resumed his stride, and to save himself the rector could not repress a certain feeling of elation caused by this fact.

The rector's face was glowing and his eyes snapped with excitement. Slowly and by degrees he managed to secure a fairly good grasp of the reins. Still he could not stop Alexander.

All his tugging at the reins, all his threats and entreaties were in vain. Alexander was fox hunting that day, so he finally gave up in despair.

Indeed, by the time he had successfully negotiated another fence it is extremely doubtful if the rector wished to stop Alexander, and before they had gone a mile the most extraordinary thing happened. The rector was actually urging Alexander on with voice and heel, and then it was that the Rev. Frederick Saunders came to know what it meant to lead the first flight in a fast run with the Meadowthorpe hounds.

The Hunt Club men saw and marvelled greatly, but they could not get near to him. There were Ralph Goring and Dick Middleton, and young Tom Halliday and old Major Barclay, all well mounted and notoriously straight riders, but they could not live with the rector and Alexander that day.

Over hill and dale he led them, a unique figure in his flying overcoat, never stopping for anything. Alexander jumped like a bird, and the rector always managed by hook or crook to land in the saddle. The fox was heading for the barrens across the valley, and his way led past a little homestead known as Higgins's Farm.

Here the hounds pressed him hard, and it suddenly dawned upon wily Reynard that he could never hope to reach that snug hole in the barrens with his brush intact. So he cast about him for some other avenue of escape.

Farmer Higgins's front gate was closed, and Reynard slipped under. Straight to the kitchen door, which was wide open, he sped, with the hounds close at his heels. Then to the closed gate came the rector and Alexander, and the astonishment of Farmer Higgins and his family can be better imagined than described as they saw the reverend gentleman take the four-barred gate without a moment's hesitation.

The fox meanwhile had sought refuge beneath a bench upon which numerous pails of milk were set, as is the frequent custom with farmers in the winter. He was straightway followed, however, into the kitchen by the now frenzied pack of hounds, who were snapping and snarling at him, trying to dislodge him from his asylum.

In a moment the Rev. Saunders had thrown himself from Alexander and was down on his hands and knees in the midst of the pack. He seized Master Reynard in triumph, and was about to resume an erect attitude when something, either the impatient surging of the hounds or his own awkwardness, upset the bench and several gallons of milk were overturned upon the reverend sportsman.

It was thus that Ralph Goring and Tom Halliday found him as they rode up to the kitchen door, dripping from

every point with lacteal fluid but flushed and triumphant with success, and holding the fox, unharmed, high above the reach of the hounds.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I believe that the first one 'in at the death' is entitled to the 'brush' upon an occasion of this sort. In this case I claim the whole fox."

The rest of the field coming up by this time, the rector's claim was vociferously allowed, and there was some disposition to give him three cheers into the bargain, but this the rector checked with upraised hand.

"This is my first hunt," he said, "and my last, I trust. But, gentlemen, that's a good horse of mine."

So it transpired that Master Reynard escaped with a whole skin and lived to a ripe old age as a pampered if somewhat ungrateful pensioner in a snug cage at the rectory. But the rector didn't preach his anti-fox hunting sermon on the following Sunday.

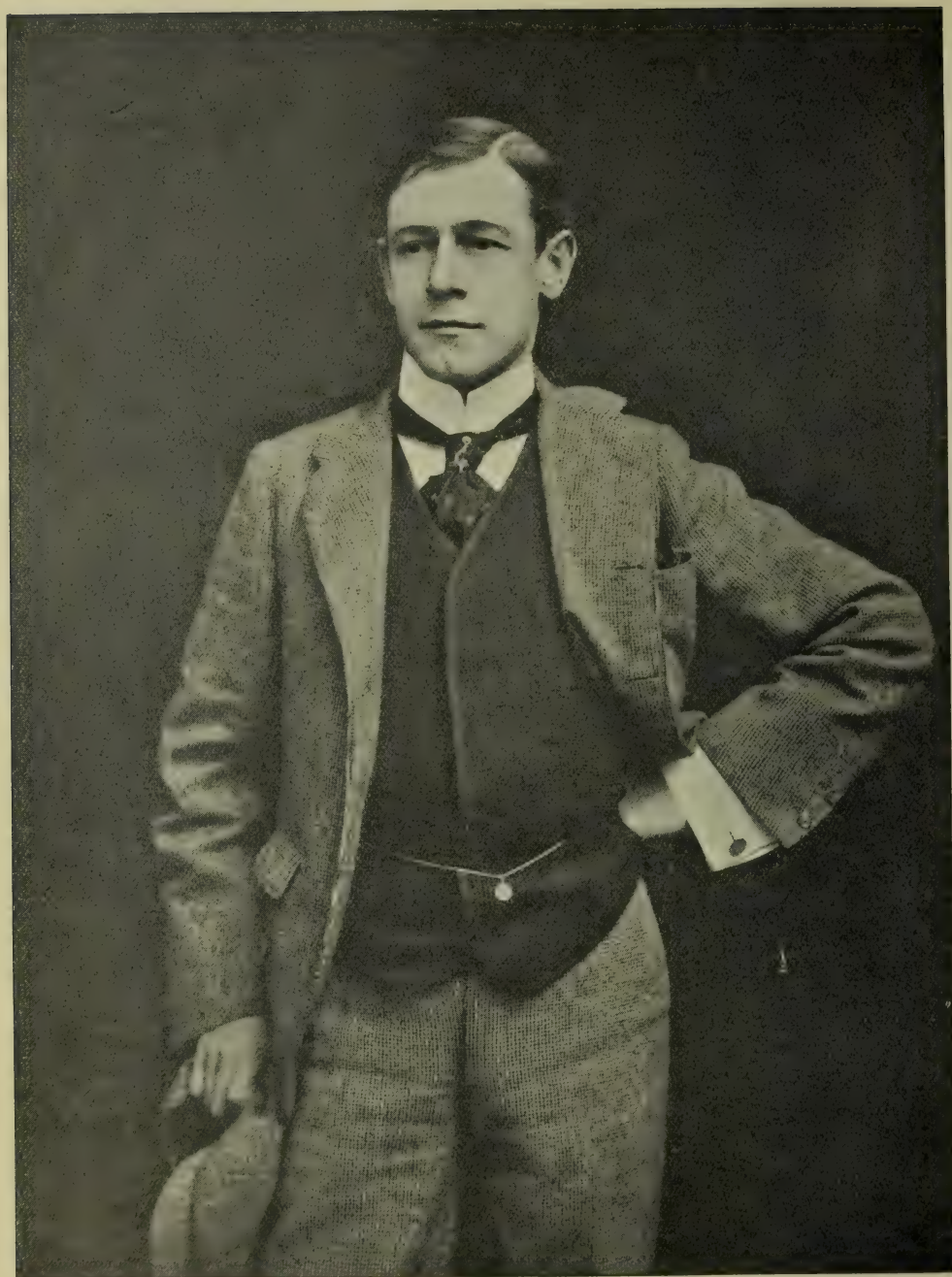
Bruce Harrington was surprised on the following morning when the rector's groom, riding Alexander, delivered to him this note from his master.

"DEAR BRUCE,—I send by the bearer, as a present, my horse Alexander. He is too good a hunter to carry a parson over the roads, and now that I have tasted its delights (this is strictly between ourselves) I cannot find it in my heart to deprive such keen sportsmen as yourself and Alexander of so much enjoyment.

"Yours faithfully,

"FREDERICK SAUNDERS."





HADDON CHAMBERS.

*Photo by Godbolt & Co.*

## HADDON CHAMBERS

### AUSTRALIA'S DRAMATIST

By EMMIE AVERY KEDDELL

HONESTLY, Mr. Haddon Chambers is to-day as unwilling to talk about himself and his doings as he was some five years ago before the production of the "Tyranny of Tears," a play which has passed for restrained satire, minute observation, and a masterly delicate handling of two complex feminine temperaments, into one of our present century classics. "The woman is wise who does her crying in private," was the object-lesson of the "Tyranny of Tears," and was ever play more fitly, more subtly named?

And now that the "Golden Silence" has come as still another phase of this extraordinary man's power to throw himself into every step of life, the public, as is its method with its workers, whose private histories they regard very much as our countrymen view St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the National Gallery, or Buckingham Palace, as a part of their personal possessions, are eagerly interested in the most trivial detail of Mr. Chambers's life. In the minority, probably, are the folks who do *not* know that Haddon Chambers is an Australian by birth, a son of the country which has given us, it is true, novelists such as Rolf Boldrewood, Mrs. Campbell Praed, Ethel Turner, and poets in Adam Lindsay Gordon and Kendall, but only one dramatist, and there are people who, knowing this man well, and of how much of his youth was spent under the open sky in the "noble, silent bush," hold that it was so he gained his fear-

lessness, his need to probe deeply into the very heart of things, to weigh cause and effect, and the inward forces working and compelling the trend of men and women's actions.

Coming to London for the first time in 1880, Mr. Chambers returned the next year to the Colonies, but to come back to us in 1882, when he commenced that uphill fight of wresting the gift which the gods are said to envy most from an always unwilling world, until his love for physiologic dissection turned his mind to stage writing, and the acceptance of a one-act play determined him to "hold fast" until, in 1888, Mr. Beerbohm Tree produced that (because of its deep mother interest and reproach) saddest of all plays, "Captain Swift." Thus in a single night the author came from out the silence into the light and knowledge of men. At the Haymarket Theatre "Captain Swift" ran for two hundred and fifty nights, and this a *serious play*—not a musical farce! I am, I think, correct in stating that "Captain Swift" was subsequently revived for an additional fifty nights.

I have repeatedly heard "Captain Swift" described as Mr. Tree's finest piece of characterisation up to that time, and Mr. Chambers says himself "he could have wished for no more faithful interpretation."

"The Idler" followed "Captain Swift," played by Mr. George Alexander at the St. James's Theatre for another two hundred and fifty nights, and if "Captain Swift" is the stronger because of



its truth, brutal perhaps, but still truth, "The Idler" surely stands as the very sweetest and most pathetic play of our time. One wonders if it was not at this time that Mr. Chambers first realised how—

"Loud words and longing are so little worth,"

and so taught the play-going world the splendour of silence when he dropped the curtain upon Mark Cross sitting alone with his thoughts and his memories, to be always alone.

"The Honourable Herbert" was the third play from Haddon Chambers's pen; written for Mr. Thomas Thorne, then holding the management of the Vaudeville. "The Honourable Herbert" suffered ill-luck, for not only was it produced upon one of the foggiest nights London has known, but almost simultaneously with the death of the Duke of Clarence.

It was at the Haymarket at the close of 1894 that Mr. Tree staged "John a' Dreams," with himself in the title-role, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell in that of Kate Cloud. "John a' Dreams" met with a splendid reception, and not less remarkable for days afterwards was the noted controversy that waged in the columns of the *Times*, induced by Mr. Chambers's delicate treatment of a vital moral question, upon which the main interest of the play turned. Then it would seem as if this dramatist's views, temperament, nay, his outlook, must have completely changed, for he left the solving of difficult physiological problems, to write, between 1894 and 1897, in collaboration, three dramas for the Adelphi—"The Fatal Card" with Mr. B. C. Stephenson, and "Poys Together"; "In the days of the Duke" in conjunction with Mr. Comyns Carr—and although, as we know, these were wholly successful dramas, we were glad when this dramatist experienced that inevitable revulsion to type in his conception of the "Tyranny of Tears," a three-act play of serious interest.

In the early part of November Mr. Haddon Chambers went over to Boston to produce, under the management of Mr. Charles Frohman, a new play called "The Younger Mrs. Parling." The theme—that of a French piece named "Le Létour"—was recently purchased by Mr. Frohman, but given a free hand both in its adaptation and production, this playwright has wandered very considerably from the original, and has given us what is in reality a new play. The manager (away at the time of its production) left the entire production to Mr. Chambers, and this taking place upon November 17th (with Miss Anne Russell, the star actress, in the principal part), won both from critics and public a great success. "The Younger Mrs. Parling" will be submitted to a New York audience in February, and we are promised that it shall eventually appear in London.

Mr. Chambers's recent play, "The Golden Silence," has met with so much and so widely diverse criticism from other hands than those of the mere interviewer, who sets out in an honest endeavour not so much to criticise as to record impressions, that one hesitates to tread even between the lines, but I would say quite simply that it would seem as if one half of the critics had set themselves down to read into what is really a deep tragedy of the heart, a sort of farcical merriment. This would appear to be wholly impossible did not one remember how near akin to tears our laughter is, and how foolery ever steps upon the heels of the most tragic hour.

Mr. Chambers says he never found any play quite so difficult to name as this one, which he originally intended to call "A Great Lady," until he found that Lady Trowbridge and Mr. B. C. Stephenson had already given that title to a play in which they had collaborated. "A Great Lady" appeared to him so eminently suitable, because Lady Arlington was intended to be in every

sense and finding of the word a great lady—a woman great in the many parts going to the making of gracious womanhood, not merely great in virtue of place or power.

Very pretty is the story of how Mr. Chambers at length named his play (though it has been told before). Mr. Chambers—who for very many years has been an ardent and intelligent Swinburnite—was re-reading Swinburne's exquisite lines on silence in "Atalanta in Calydon," when the following lines struck him with still further meaning:—

"But ye, keep ye on earth  
Your lips from over-speech,  
Loud words and longings are so little worth;  
And the end is hard to reach,  
For silence after grievous things is good.  
And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,  
And shame and righteous governance of blood,  
And lordship of the soul.  
But from sharp words and wit men pluck no fruit,  
And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root,  
For words divide and rend,  
But silence is most noble to the end."

And speaking of the end, it would, perhaps, not be wholly inappropriate to remind this playwright, that even now "the end is not yet," nor even still so hard to reach.

## THE ARROW'S MESSAGE

By H. WESTBROOK

CARELESS, weaved I garlands gay,  
Decked the altars of to-day,  
Took what life was pleased to give,  
Grateful in that I did live.

Lightsome fancy, mellow quip  
Fell sublimely from my lip;  
'Twas an easy worship mine,  
Idling at the Present's shrine.

Furled my sails and zephyr-fanned  
Watched the banks on either hand,  
Drifting slowly with the stream,  
Well content to drift and dream.

\* \* \* \* \*

Cupid spied my lagging craft,  
Bent his bow, and launched a shaft;  
Other gods I must forget,  
Every stitch of canvas set.

Stung with pain, to pleasure blind,  
Fret and pray for favouring wind;  
Haste to work out Love's decree,  
"Face to stem the open sea."





"POPPIES.

## WANTED—A HOME

By F. E. SMITH

**I**T was early in the afternoon when I first found Giles. Let me be honest—for, alas! the time for dissimulation has passed away—and say that Giles found me. Had it been late at night I could have borne it better, for then the passers-by would have been fewer, and he would have had less choice; but the streets were crowded. Yet—oh! the irony of fate—Giles chose me!

I was walking home more quickly than usual, all unconscious of my doom. But that doom lay ready for me.

How he came, or where he came from, I do not know. It is quite enough to know that he came. I took no notice when I first saw his shadowy white form. I never, on principle, speak to stray dogs; but, from his subsequent actions, I might as well have gone on my knees and implored him, by all the largest bones in my vocabulary, not to desert me.

He darted forward as I glanced at him, gave a little yap of joy, and jumped as high as my coat, leaving several paw-marks upon it.

"My master!" he said, as plainly as bark could speak. "My dear master! At last—at last—we have met!"

We had indeed. But still I strolled on in unconscious bliss. How curious, I thought, that the dog should have mistaken me for his master. It was unlike dog-nature, but then he looked a cur—and a foolish one at that.

I lived to amend that statement. A cur Giles might be, but his cunning and his brains were as boundless as the ocean.

I walked on—so did Giles. I turned down a side road. Giles, with tail erect—and it was a hideous tail—came too.

I stopped to light my pipe again. Giles sat and waited.

I thought it was time to take steps, and I waved my stick at him with a menacing remark. Giles' impudence was such that he scarcely lowered his tail. I picked up a stone. Giles waited for its delivery, and I missed my mark. It is difficult to hit a dog which sits up and waits to be stoned, with one ear cocked up and a wagging tail. I walked on, conscious that two old ladies were eyeing me with strong disapproval. Giles walked on too.

After half-an-hour I turned round again. Giles trotted demurely behind, but in his expressive eye I read: "You are my master. We will live and die together."

I grew desperate and hailed a policeman.

"I say—this dog has been following me for the last half-hour. I wish——"

I turned to point out the delinquent, but there was no such person. Giles had vanished as suddenly and completely as if he had indeed been—ah! would that it could have been so—a figment of my imagination. I looked extremely foolish—I often do when Giles is in the question—but my relief was great. I was too relieved even to take exception at the policeman's grinning face.

On I went, and—so did Giles. I found that out when I had turned the street corner. The faithful hound was at my heels again. There was no one near. I stopped and tried reason.



"Look here," I said kindly, "you are making a big mistake. I am not your master, and I certainly never shall be. You had better go and look for someone who is. He may be breaking his heart for you. You should really try and find him, and ease his mind. There!" I said it in a final tone, as who should say: "Good afternoon. I am afraid I really *must* be going."

Giles looked up at me; and oh! the light of affection in that dog's eyes! I had a spaniel once for nine years, but never in his whole lifetime did he look at me as Giles looked then. It brought to my mind visions—visions of Giles and I always together, inseparable, Giles at my side when I ate my dinner, Giles at my heels when I went out. It was too painful. I gave up reasoning, and turned and fled.

I had to resort to strategy; I bolted into the nearest shop, and hastily shut the door on Giles. It was a milliner's, and I was at my wit's end, but at least Giles was not at my heels.

I was inveigled into buying, before I left that shop, no less than three pairs of ladies' gloves, and I raised a considerable amount of amusement and curiosity in the minds of the shop people. But that was a small price to pay for freedom.

Grasping my packages in my hand, and trying to look as if I had bought them because I wanted them, I made my way, the cynosure of all eyes, to the shopwalker.

"Could you—er—have you another way out?" I demanded.

The resplendent creature propelled himself towards the glass doors.

"This way, if you please, sir."

"I mean"—I stammered, "the fact is—er—a stray dog has attached itself to me—and I—I want to keep out of its way."

I never in all my life encountered such a glance as that man turned on me. It withered me, it frizzled me, it scorched me. He gazed at my parcel, and

remembered that at least had been justly acquired. He glanced at my pockets, the exteriors were not incriminating; he was obliged to let me go.

With conscious honesty bristling in every seam of his coat, he led me through the ladies' hat department, where seven ladies were fitting on six bonnets, and so by another door into the street. I thanked him humbly; he watched me safely off the premises, and then darted away—I know to act as informer to the detectives he fully expected to find waiting for their prey outside the glass doors.

I stumbled as I hastened away—over Giles!

I believe he knew what I had been doing, for though he greeted me kindly, there was a reproachful look in his eyes.

"Have you been trying to escape again?" he seemed to say; "what is it you fear? I shall be a considerate master, as masters go." And as he framed our positions thus—probably unconsciously, for he always outwardly kept up the hollow semblance of master and dog—Giles for once in his life spoke the truth.

There was one hope left. There was a wisp of brown leather round his neck; I examined it, trembling as I did so lest I should find no trace of his whereabouts. If there was but an address! the winds themselves would scarcely bear me too swiftly to Giles' residence, and to his sorrowing family.

My hopes were doomed. The one word "Giles" was scrawled across the collar—and that was all.

Had he lived in Giles Road or Giles Street, Giles Mansion or Giles Cottage; or was his own name Giles, or that of his thrice-blessed owner? We shall never know.

He did, indeed, look at me joyfully when I called him "Giles," but then he was always looking at me joyfully, and he would come as fast, or faster, if I called him "Snap" or "Jack," or even "Rover."

I went home slowly and thoughtfully. Thus had my last hope flown. Giles trotted faster; he seemed relieved to think that the toils of day would soon be over, and he probably had visions of a warm fireside and of a prominent bone. It must be tiring work, this attachment of slippery and unwilling masters.

It may have been accident, but I have more reason to believe it was his horrible sagacity, which caused Giles to stop at my gate. Anyhow, he did stop, and politely allowed me to enter first. I left him standing there, shut the garden gate, locked the front door, and wondered what would happen next. Considering all things, I thought I did well not to take too optimistic a view.

Nevertheless, my spirits rose insensibly next morning at breakfast time. I had expected a night made hideous by howls and whines; there had not been a sound. I had expected Giles to be sitting by my chair when I came in; the room was empty.

I sat down with a good appetite, and read my letters.

In the middle of breakfast, a horrible chaos of sound proceeded from the front garden.

I sat transfixed, for I knew—I knew—it was Giles!

A minute or two later the door opened, and my friend Smith came in, decidedly hot and flushed, and with seven distinct paw-marks on his clothes. (It was, needless to say, a muddy morning.)

"Didn't know you had started a dog," he said, rather shortly. "You might as well teach it not to kick up such a row every time anyone comes in at your gate."

I explained. He listened, but I read his scepticism in his face.

"Well, take him to Battersea," he said, shortly.

I wasted no more words, though the idea of Giles being taken to Battersea almost made me smile. Soon after,

Smith left, and I went with him to the gate.

Giles lay on the mat. He greeted us with an exuberance of affection, and I could see that Smith's belief in me was still further shaken. Giles apologised for his over-carefulness in a most gentlemanly way, intimated that he himself would see my friend—since he really was my friend, nothing was too good for him—to the gate, and that my presence was therefore superfluous.

Smith stooped to pat him as he left, and called back to me: "You might get the poor brute a new collar. He's not fit to be seen."

A new hope flashed into my mind. The cook hated dogs, and the cook ruled my house.

I washed my hands of Giles, and left his fate to other powers.

Alas! alas! fate pursued me a morning or two later in the shape of Jane, the housemaid.

"Cook, she wants to know if that little white dog you brought home with you, sir"—brought, oh! the irony of it!—"can sleep in the kitchen, if she makes up a bed for it. She 'as taken to it so, and says as 'ow she knows you won't 'ave the 'eart to turn it out."

I went to the cook. Perhaps Giles had not woven the toils too close—her eyes might yet be opened.

But when I saw those two together, I practically threw up my hand. Giles lay on the rug, with an enormous bone. Ever and anon he turned his languishing eye upward, and it rested on the cook's face.

When he saw me, his joy was unbounded. The cook stood and watched us frisking, her fat face a wreath of smiles.

"There, if 'e ain't an affectionate creature! Leaving 'is bone and all, to come and welcome you, sir! You're in luck's way to 'ave found 'im, that's what Jane and I says. Such a little dear as 'e is," she went on, warming still more to her subject, "and that fond of me



already! Why, it you'll believe me, sir"—I would believe anything and everything—"when 'e came in, 'e was that 'ungry it went to my 'art to see 'im eat; but 'e'd leave all his nice bones and gravy, and follow me into the pantry. 'E just couldn't bear to let me out of 'is sight. 'E's getting less timid now, bless 'im! 'E knows I ain't a-going to be spirited away, and 'e ain't afraid to be left 'ere with 'is bone now. Don't 'e be frightened, then! We'll never turn 'im out, will we, sir?"

Oh! woman, blind—blind—blind! I could have told you why Giles no longer followed you into the pantry. He had discovered that bones were not kept there!

But when did it ever profit to argue with a woman against her affections?

Giles had been beforehand with me. The victory was to him.

"Then perhaps," I said with a ghastly

smile, "you will look after him? And I suppose I must get a license."

I turned back to look at them as I left the kitchen. The cook was bending over Giles with honeyed words, and he was responding as only Giles could respond.

But one eye was turned on me—and I know he winked.

Giles is very fat and sleek.

He has a special armchair appropriated to his use, and it is an exceedingly comfortable one. In happier days gone by it used to be mine, so I ought to know.

He has a silver collar, which even the cook allows is almost worthy of him. She has insisted on having my name and address engraved in full upon it.

Every day, when I come in from work. I expect to find a brass plate upon the door:—

"Dogs advised as to the choice of comfortable and permanent homes. Advice entirely gratis. Apply within."

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## EVENING

By EVELYN D. GREEN

SOFTLY steal the evening shadows,  
Slowly sinks the setting sun,  
Tinging gold the waving bracken,  
Rustled by the wind in fun.

Surely creeps the darkness onwards,  
Now 'tis night, and all is still,  
Save the chirping of the crickets,  
And the trickling of the rill.

Bending lowly are the fernlets,  
Silvered by the moonbeam's kiss,  
Drinking in the fairy dew-drops,  
Falling from the sky's abyss.

So there cometh in life's evening,  
Fading rays once golden bright;  
Yet the silence bears the message:  
"At eventide there shall be light."

## THE IDLERS' CLUB

By ROBERT BARK

*A Sign of the Times.* In Cairo there is a sign over a shop which reads: "I can speak English, and understand American."

This terse sentence recognises, perhaps unconsciously, the growing divergence between the two languages. Many of us may well envy that Egyptian shop-keeper's linguistic acquirements, which he states with so much confidence, for some of us can do neither the one nor the other. There was a time when I might have been bold enough to assert that I understood the American tongue, but self-doubt is a plant which grows with increasing years, and I should now hesitate to make such a claim. I believe that within a hundred years Silas K. Hopper will be Professor of American in Oxford; London shops will display the sign, "American Spoken Here"; and High schools will print in their prospectuses that they teach the American language. Authors in either country will have to face the expense of translation, as we do now when we wish the countries of Germany or France to profit by a perusal of our immortal works.

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In all the cheaper and more popular American *Slang.* periodicals the stories are so saturated with slang that they are scarcely understandable by those who have not kept themselves informed of the newer vulgarities in speech. Time was when slang was confined to the conversation of the characters in American fiction that it might give verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative, but now slang has penetrated into the diction of the author himself, and he seems to think it gives a new smartness to his writing, which perhaps

it does. It might be supposed that the numerous centres of learning in the United States would offer some resistance to this avalanche of lingual mud, but this is very doubtful. Yale University stands in the van of intellectual progress over there, and Thomas R. Lounsbury is Yale's professor of English. He is the author of two articles in recent numbers of *Harper's Magazine* on the theme, "Is English Becoming Corrupt?" Professor Lounsbury holds that it is not. He insists that the language absorbs what it needs from slang, and has always done so. If a term is expressive, or above all, if it proves useful, taking up a position in the language not hitherto occupied, the language adopts it, and it ceases to be slang from that time onwards. He instances the word "mob," which was once the slang equivalent of the noble term "mobile vulgus," but it happened to designate a particular kind of crowd which no other word stood for, therefore "mob" will receive an honoured position in Dr. Murray's dictionary when his celebrated serial publication reaches the letter "M."

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Slang is sometimes expressive and sometimes *To Back Water.* bewildering. The other day a Far Eastern correspondent of *The Morning Post*, in an interesting article on the Russia-Japan situation, said that one or other of these two countries would have to "take back water." Now, if he means that Russia and Japan are competing with each other as the Oxford and Cambridge boat crews compete on the Thames, his English is probably correct, for the crew that is behind in the race must take the back water of the other crew.



But apparently it was not the simile of the boat race that was in his mind, but rather the simile of two boats approaching each other head on, and so he should have said that one or other would have to back water—an entirely different thing, meaning the reversing of the stroke and pulling astern. I suppose “to back water” is good English, but it sounds suspiciously like slang. If it had been an American who was writing, he would probably have said that either Japan or Russia would have to “take a back seat,” which would be slang, plain and unashamed.

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It is a little difficult to say what is slang and what is not. The technicalities of any trade is slang to the outsider, yet is the most graphic English to the mechanic himself. Sometimes authors take the trouble to acquaint themselves with these slang expressions in order to give local colour to their stories, and the colour is often so dazzling that we lose sight of the narrative itself. Kipling generally saves himself by leaving little islands of non-technicality, which the reader may use as stepping-stones to get at the climax. Yet the unfortunate reader frequently makes a mis-step, and is lost. “The Ship that Found Herself,” published some years ago in *THE IDLER*, and the story about the destroyer, printed the other day in *The Windsor*, are instances of this sort of thing. American humorists have generally tried to enhance their effects by playing tricks with the language itself. Artemus Ward, Josh Billings, Orphius C. Kerr, and Petroleum V. Nasby hid a good deal of wit and wisdom in rank bad spelling. Then arose a new school of humorists, of which Mark Twain is the chief, who depended on wild exaggerations for their fun, but, nevertheless, their work was made worth while by dramatic situations, and by the creation of

character. “Huckleberry Finn” is as much a character in the English-speaking world as Micawber himself. Now the American humorist is calling slang to his aid, with the probable result that humour will fade away and die in the United States. They have a favourite sauce over there which is called “Tobasco.” It is so hot that, when you become accustomed to it, cayenne pepper seems a mild condiment like French mustard. The Tobasco victim acquires a palate which has no appreciation of the finer flavours that content the ordinary man. In like manner the reader, whose taste has been destroyed by wild exaggeration and preposterous statement, loses all sense of proportion, and thinks that because he is unable to see the subtle point of an English joke, therefore that point does not exist. Listen to the late. Edgar W. Nye on English humour.

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“If the lost and undone victim will for a moment turn his mind to the solemn consideration of London *Punch*, and wrestle with it alone, where the prying eyes of the world cannot penetrate, though unused to tears, the fountains of the great deep in his nature will be opened up, and he will see the blackness of intense darkness which surrounds him, and be led to penitence and abject humility.

“The mission of the English humorist is to darken the horizon and shut out the false and treacherous joy of existence—to shut out the beauty of the landscape and scatter a gloom over the glad green earth.

“English humour is like a sore toe. It makes you glad when you get over it. It is like having the small-pox, because if you live through it you are not likely to have it again.”

On turning to the fly-leaf of the book from which I have made the foregoing

extract, I find written in Bill Nye's hand—"Private property. Stolen. July 11th, 1883." Then he adds below—"Or second thoughts, presented to Mr. Barr, with the author's sincere regards. EDGAR WILSON NYE. April 7th, 1885." I imagine the editor of *Punch* can see whatever joke lies in that dedication, even though he might not break into laughing over it, and thus he has a double advantage over Bill Nye, in that he can appreciate the humour of two countries, whereas William was colour-blind to the humour of one.

There is an extract  
*Prize* from this book which  
*Offer.* gives a better example  
 than I could find in all

Kipling's works of what I have referred to as the "slang of trade," and I am willing to offer a prize of sixpence to any Englishman who can translate it. It is the slang of a Western railwayman. Mr. E. W. Nye, when he was out West, stopped at a boarding-house, and was given the room usually occupied by a locomotive engineer. At three o'clock in the morning he was awakened by a brakeman, who threw gravel against the panes, and when Mr. Nye opened the window and saw the railway-man outside with a lantern on his arm, he found himself "up against" the following statement, as the user of slang would say:—

"Hullo, Fatty, is that you? Just lookin' to see if you'd fired up yet. You know I was to come round and flag you if second seven was out. Well, I've been down to the old man's to see what's on the board. Three is two hours late, and four is on time. There's two sevens out and two sections of nine. Skinny'll take out first seven and Shorty'll pull her with 102. It's you and me for second seven, with Limber Jim on front end and Frenchy to hold down the caboose. First fire is wrong side up in a washout this side of Ogal-

lalla, and old What'shisname that runs 250 got his crown-sheet caved in and telescoped his headlight into the middle of New Jerusalem. You know the little Swede that used to run extra for Old Hotbox on the emigrant awhile? Well, he was firing on 258, and he's under three flats and a coal-oil tank, with a brake-beam across his coupler, and his system more or less relaxed. He's gone to the sweet subsequently, too. Rest of the boys are more or less demoralised and side-tracked for repairs. Now, you don't want to monkey around much, for if you don't loom up like six bits and go out on tick, the old man'll give you a time check and the Oriental Grand Bounce. You hear the mellow trill of my bazoo?"

To this harangue the humorist replied:—

"Partner, I am pleased and gratified to have met you. I don't know the first ding busted thing you have said to me, but that is my misfortune. I am a plain miner, and my home is in the digestive apparatus of the earth; but for professional melody of the chin, you certainly take the cake."

Now, I don't know how  
*A German* it strikes you, but that  
*Story.* railway-man's lingo seems  
 to me very funny. Yet I read it once to an American railway man, and he saw no humour in it. 'Cause why? It was his regular language. The remarks to him were as clear as daylight, and he didn't see how the brakeman could have put the matter more lucidly. This reminds me of a voyage I took on the German Lloyd steamer *Kaiser Wilhelm II.*; not the present ship of that name, but a smaller and slower boat that has gone before. The captain was a very stout man, who, besides being her captain, had also designed the vessel. He had a keen appreciation of a funny story, and himself told many of them in the smoking



room. But there was one yarn we never could get him to comprehend, for the same reason that the railway-man could not see the point to the effusion from Bill Nyè which I have quoted. The story was told by a man from Brooklyn, and ran as follows :—

A celebrated German preacher who spoke English, not nearly as well as he thought he did, went over to America, and was invited by Henry Ward Beecher to occupy his pulpit at Plymouth Church. The German preacher rose to his feet, and gave out the following amazing text : “ And he tore his shirt ! ”

The large congregation was at once puzzled and shocked, whereupon Mr. Beecher, with a smile on his face, arose and explained :—

“ My brother is referring to the well-known words : ‘ And the door is shut. ’ ”

Now the German captain of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II.* struggled all that voyage to see where the point lay. His pronunciation of the two sentences was identical.

A very good story explanatory of the correct meaning of words is told of Noah Webster, the learned compiler of

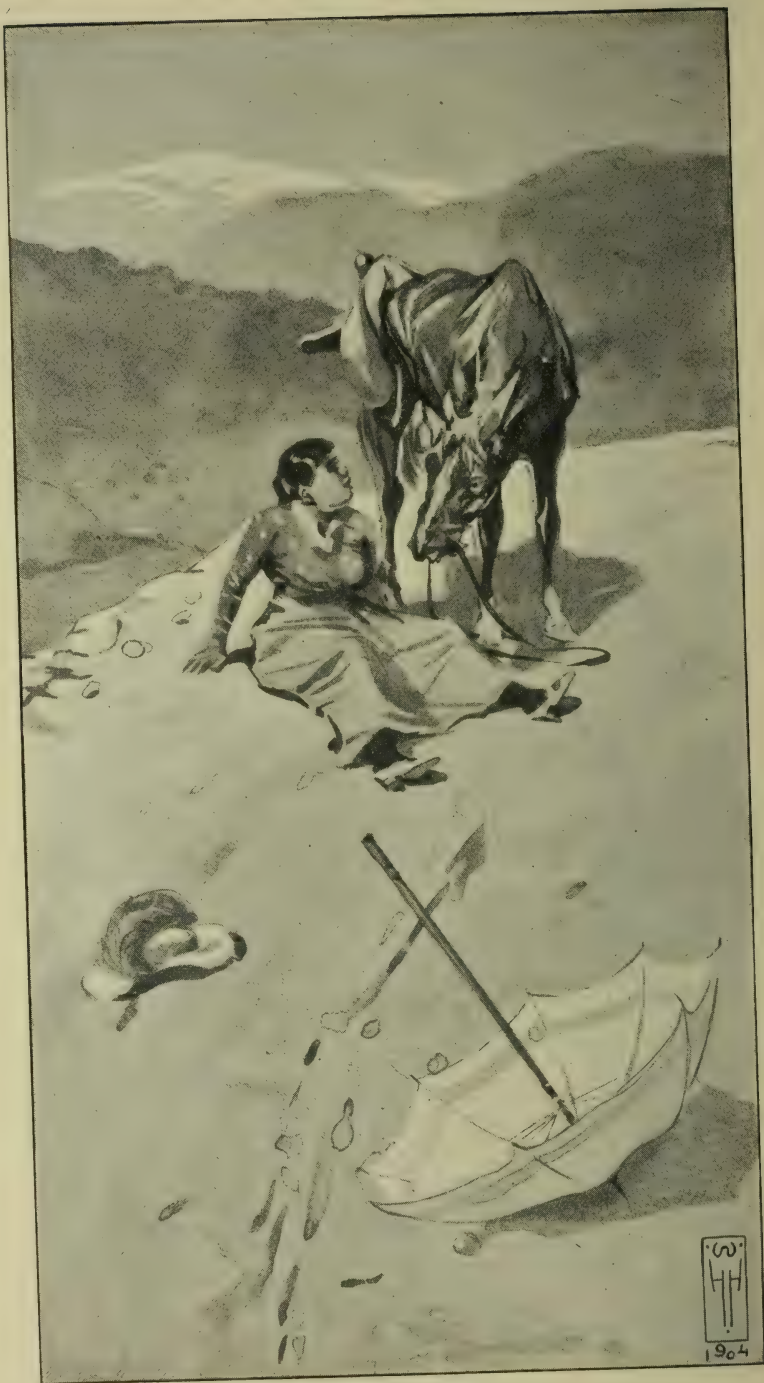
*Subtilities of Meaning.* America's first big dictionary. Noah was an unconventional man who loved his unconventional friends, but his wife was a stickler for propriety, and so the somewhat henpecked Webster rarely got a good chance of making merry with his cronies. Once the good lady left home on what was supposed to be a prolonged visit, but some interference caused her to return unexpectedly, and she found her husband in his shirt-sleeves, holding carnival over strong waters in company with a number of friends also in their shirt-sleeves. The shocked lady gazed at this disreputable gathering for a moment in silence, then she said :—

“ Well, I *am* surprised ! ”

“ No, my dear,” said the lexicographer, mildly, “ I am surprised ; you are astonished.”







"A MIDDLE-AGED LADY WAS SITTING IN THE ROAD"

# CARINGTON AND THE BOUNDARY MAP

By MAYNE LINDSAY

*Illustrated by W. Herbert Holloway*

THE bridle-road from the plains to Nymoori climbs at an angle when saddles slip and ponies sweat, and the inexperienced rider is possessed by cramps innumerable.

Rattray Carington, who was going up in May after special service below, sang lustily to the monkeys out of the fulness of his heart.

He gave a whoop of joy, and swept round a garlanded hill elbow, to be checked by the spectacle that was revealed behind it.

A middle-aged lady was sitting in the road, with her toes pointing to the heights beyond her. She was very fat, very dusky, largely blotched with sand, and a lean pony, wearing a side-saddle upon the root of its tail, contemplated her with dejection. A rent, running from the arm-hole of her magenta blouse to the orange ribbon belt which confined it, suggested that her occupation of the road had been accomplished in speed and violence. She vibrated tearfully, a jelly of distress.

Carington offered help.

"I'm afraid you've had a bad spill," he said; and culled a feathered hat, a parasol, and a paper-bag of biscuits from the roadside.

"Oa yees! I am quite upset. I am verree badly hurt; everything seems

*oolta-poolta*," said the fat lady. "Oa deear!"—and she sobbed loudly—"I was verree fooleesh to ride that *soor-of-a-ponee*."

"Your girths are too loose," Carington said, glancing at the saddle. "I don't think the pony is to blame. Let me help you up"—he did so, with straining of muscles—"and then I will see how I can remedy the trouble."

The girth proved on inspection to be several sizes too large for the wizened pony. It was impossible that the saddle could be mounted again safely.

"'Twon't fit my beast either," Carington said. "Otherwise—— But if you will allow me to lead yours up the hill and send down a dandy for you, I shall be delighted."

The dark lady looked up from an inspection of a vast cotton-clad ankle, and her gasps, which had been declining in careful gradation, ceased altogether.

"Oa noa!" she said. "I could not stay here alone after such an accident; I should be quite sillee. But I will walk beside you up the hill, mister, and I shall be verree obliged if you will lead that *budmarsh* ponee to my bungalow, which is not-at-all far from-heear. Then if you will come in and have-a-peg, or a glass of lemonade, my daughter will be very pleased to give-a-drink."

Carington stalked up the hill with a rein in each hand, and the puffing breaths of the Eurasian matron loud in his ears. He was amused: he was also pleased. His knowledge of native life, of which, after some years of service, he possessed a useful store, had been gained by slow penetration and subtlety; his appreciation of Anglo-English society had been tested, and found to be comprehensive enough for his needs. But the great between world—the vast desert of existence in which dwelled the despised of two races, the people who were neither black nor white, Oriental nor European—was still unexplored. An excursion into it would be instructive, and it did not need much intelligence to know that the fat lady, into whose net this rare fish had swum so unexpectedly, had a social ambition which the incursion would satisfy. Carington had addressed her as one of his own kind; he had won her heart by the unstudied flattery. She prattled to him with all the breath that she could spare, and they had not turned in through the rickety gateposts, beyond which a ramshackle bungalow concealed its shabbiness behind a blistered, green-pillared verandah, before she had sketched him the outline of her family affairs. For this was Mrs. Gomez, lately come from visiting Mrs. Silva at Chiriaganj—hence the orange and magenta—the widow of a ticket-clerk (only she called him a higher grade railway official), and, as she assured Carington earnestly, a lady of very good connections, a member of one of the best Nymoori families. And she spoke proudly of her uncle, the deputy-collector, as one who speaks of a kinsman in the peerage.

There was a flutter of petticoats in the verandah, and two brown-skinned young women, in cherry ribbons and soiled white muslin, swooped upon Mrs. Gomez, with little shrieks of consternation, and side-long looks at Carington.

"There, there, I am quite better now,"

their mother said, rising out of a sea of query and answer, ejaculation and comment. "This verree kind gentleman will have a lemonade. *Shu*"—to a skinny fowl that strayed out of an inner room, and appeared to share the general astonishment—" *Shu*, you dirtie thing! . . . This is my little daughter, Miss Gomez, and this is my eldest daughter, Mrs. Mueller, and her husband, Mr. Mueller, of Government service."

Mr. Mueller looked as if he would take the introduction without stirring from his hammock-chair. Then, as Carington's bow met his eye, he started, like one who recalls a long-forgotten memory, and sprang up with click of heels and a sweep from the waist. The action seemed to force itself upon him, and Carington's attention, trained to weigh incongruities, was caught at once. He looked up, and found in Mr. Mueller the stamp of birth and breeding, which, half obscured by his Gomez surroundings, had nevertheless responded mechanically to the salutation of an equal.

"And what the deuce are *you* doing in this galley?" the police superintendent meditated behind his glass of lemonade. He looked from the Gomez family in its defiant finery to the clean-handed, straight-backed man, who was, by mould of nostril and curve of lip, by the attributes that defied ill-cut clothes and country boots, palpably a being in it but not of it, a wanderer not less out of place in the borderland than Carington himself. Yet he was fettered to a Gomez born—the slatternly, the gross-hued, the half-washed—and it was patent to Carington's eye that he took, for reasons not to be pierced by a bow at a venture, a certain cynical pleasure in the degree of his abasement.

"Oa, yees," Mrs. Gomez was saying, "my son-in-law, Mr. Mueller, comes from Europe. He has a very good position under Government, like my husband, Mr. Gomez."

"No, no, mamma. Albert is in a



verree much better appointment than papa," Mrs. Mueller protested, rolling her eyes to her husband, and withdrawing them instantly at his frown.

"Been in India long, sir?" Carington asked.

"I came over from Austria seven years ago, and was fortunate enough to find the employment a pair of needy hands wanted," Mr. Mueller said,

with only the roll of gutturals slurring his English. He waved his hands in illustration, and Carington observed their slender proportion and their taper nails. "India is the land of my adoption, the free British Government the ruler of my choice."

"And our little *koti* is your home always, dear Albert," said Mrs. Gomez, swelling with pride at her son-in-law. "I could not have given my sweet Cora to anybodee less refined than Mr. Mueller. My uncle, the deputy-collector——"

But Carington did not want more information respecting the deputy-collector. He rose, responded vaguely to Mrs. Gomez's invitation, chorussed by her daughters, to drop in and "have a lemonade" on future occasions, and when he left, he looked straight at Mr. Mueller and saluted him as punctiliously as before. This time the return was a studied clownishness, and no movement from the chair.

"Government Department, eh?" Carington was still ruminating as he



"MR. MUELLER, OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE."

steered his pony through the crowded Mall. "Now, who is the biggest idiot in the headquarters staff?"

A rickshaw passed him, with a flower-like woman smiling from it. She was looking with a flattery that was just a little overdrawn at a large man, eyeglassed and white-waistcoated, who bobbed on horseback beside her.

"Answered, by Jove!" and Carington laughed out aloud. "Who but Fulleylove?"

He went his way satisfied, and laid a trap in the club breakfast-room two days later. Into it, an inviting chair in the brightest corner of the room, stepped Major Fulleylove, a little red about the eyes and ragged about the moustache, to crumble toast and execrate the club cook.

"How do you like being at headquarters?" Carington said, when Fulleylove had sent his coffee away and succumbed to whisky-and-soda.

"Oh, not so bad. Rather a bore bein' supposed to put in work in the hills. Lot of red tape n nsense about it, of course; but it pays."

"Do you have anything to do with the Intelligence Department?" Carington said.

"H'm—yes, and no. Sivewright's office is just beyond mine, and I hear a good bit of shop from him. You are a friend of his, aren't you? Mad keen, Sivewright is, particularly about this boundary business. He's going to make things hum. He'd like me to grind away at maps and treaties and rot, but I'm not such a fool. My clerk runs through the drudgery for me. Splendid fellow!"

"What's his name?" said Carington, who had already made it his business to know.

"Eh? Oh—ah, Mueller; German extraction, I believe. A beggar to work. Funny thing, he was in the Audit, doin' well, and he took a fancy to me, and volunteered for my office when I came up. Dropped sure promotion over it. Works like a machine, y'know—hands like copper-plate. Oh! a capital chap. Permanent clerk—been there for years, though he's new to our side."

"Perhaps he knew you were an easy chief," Carington said, and Fulleylove rose from the table, assenting with a laugh.

Carington went out on to the balcony after he left, and stood there for a long time, rolling a cigarette in his fingers, and looking with unseeing eyes at the drop of the rounded hills and the counter-pane of heat-haze that smothered the plains below them. He was admiring the astuteness of Mr. Mueller in choosing to work under Fulleylove, and again he was considering the bondage he had voluntarily imposed upon himself in the Gomez family. But it was not a matter that would keep, and presently he sought out Sivewright.

"Busy? Oh, busy as can be!" said the occupant of the office high among the pines, as Carington's figure followed the scarlet-coated orderly who bore his card. "But awfully pleased to see you, Carington—now and always."

Carington had not long before laid his hands upon a man, deep in the bazaar, whose small brains the Intelligence Department had found it expedient to tap. It was a good turn, and it was not forgotten. It had served, too, another purpose, in bringing together two men of a mind and of far different careers—Rattray Carington, the District Superintendent, and Captain Sivewright, who was also young, but had a name that was known outside his department—and India.

"It's still the boundary," Sivewright said with a smile at the mass of papers that littered his desk. "I've stolen a march on them this time. They won't know, when they put their pens to the agreement, that they've blocked themselves as neatly as if they built up a brick wall."

"How's that? They'll take in the mountain and the river."

"They'll not—they'll not!" Sivewright said eagerly. "The little chap you found us spoke true, Carington. The maps are wrong. Remember, we found it necessary to send him back to his own tribe? Well, I went with him (and left him safely settled beyond further interference), and I saw for myself. Their pass! *We* keep the neck of the pass, and the mountain and the river, too. Oh! they're dished, and they sign it in a month. Serves 'em right for trusting to their own survey, who weren't made to be trusted."

"You went there?" Carington said. His mind pictured the snow-sheeted, inhospitable plateaus of the northern land, their inaccessibility, the dangers that dogged the feet of those that trod them.

Sivewright nodded.

"I am the first that ever burst—it will be a British outpost some day. Hope by then people will be able to transport a reasonable temperature with them, put up like so much gasolene," he said. "Otherwise, I'm sorry for the garrison. That's frost-bite," he added,



seeing Carington cock an eye at a maimed finger.

"Have you made out the revised map?" Carington said.

"Yes, it's been for a little jaunt to the chief, and now it has returned to its father. It's in that safe, cherished by Chubb, watched over by the sweetest combination of locks in India."

"Is it ever left out of it?"

"I work at it on my desk, of course," Sivewright said, staring.

Carington got up and looked out of the window. It faced a little three-sided light-space, and opposite it, just visible through another window, was to be seen the head of Major Fulleylove's clerk, alone, as usual, in his office, bowed above his work.

"And if you go out in answer to a summons from the chief?" Carington said, still gazing out of the window, and observing now how door and door eyed each other.

"Well, then I—— Who would come in without the orderly at the gate seeing? What do you mean?" Sivewright's voice became quiet and hard. "You didn't come here to ask meaningless questions, Carington. Explain."

And Carington, in a corner where Mr. Albert Mueller could not see him (and he looked up from his work now and then in the opposite room), explained.

"That fellow!" cried Sivewright. "He's been seven years in the office. He's one of those wooden-headed soulless, machine-made Germans. Why, he's married and settled down—he wouldn't do anything of the kind; he's given hostage to fortune, my dear Carington, in the shape of a *karani* wife. Though it's quite true that he volunteered to serve Fulleylove, and that Fulleylove is always away, and that if I am called out—yes, he *would* be able to get across unobserved. But seven years!"

"There is a great Power that can afford to wait thrice seven years for

what it wants. You know its history," Carington said. "This is one of its units. A German! Why, Sivewright—put that man into furs and buckle a sword on him, clap him into boots and spurs! You studied at the White City. Don't you remember the stamp of its military caste? You'll find it yonder."

"The wife, Carington! The wife!"

"A very successfully placed pawn, who has covered his movements as he meant she should. But shall we put it to the test?"

"By all means," Sivewright said, still with his hard, deliberate enunciation. "Your suggestion touches a tender spot; it seems we must probe to the root of it. There is a good deal at stake, Carington, here." He laid a hand upon the papers. "We can't afford to be careless—God forgive if I have been. . . . How do you propose to prove that you are right?"

"I hope most sincerely that I am wrong," Carington said. "But you see for yourself that the business has a serious look. I advise that you should go to Fulleylove to-morrow, tell him you will be here late in the evening, and ask him to take a message to your quarters that you will want a light dinner at seven. If Mr. Mueller fancies a peep at your work, he will find an excuse to stay, too, for no doubt he has a key that will open the door of your office. He will expect to find your papers on the desk while you are away. Go to dinner, Sivewright, but don't get further than the deodars below the Government House gardens, from whence the lights of this building are visible. I'll meet you there, and we will come back together."

"Very neat—if it works," Sivewright said. His face was grim; he knitted his brows. "Has he got the map already? That is the question, assuming that your premises are correct, Carington. And now you lay them before me, I take your view too completely for my comfort."



He walked to the window, and paused there in reflection, contemplating the sleek, fair head that was suggested behind Fulleylove's desk.

"A spy?" he said. "A spy? My work flung to the dogs by that thing? Well, if Carington is right, my gentleman, I'll crush you." He clenched his hands and repeated the words. "Dirty work if it is true, and—I'll crush you."

"Do," Carington said. "The Gomez family are friends of mine. I shall see you at the ball this evening, if you want to settle details. By the way, I wonder what military service it is permitted to expiate in the Indian hills? Or would this be special service, and a laying-up of promotion and promise? For I am ready to swear that he has been an officer. Police spies are very different cattle. Good-morning, Sivewright."

Mrs. Gomez welcomed Carington's appearance the next afternoon with a preening of her feathers, and obvious, shining pleasure. The visitors who rocked in her verandah were too uniformly dusky for her to look upon her new acquaintance without gratification.

"A little, a verree, verree little whisky-peg?" she said. "Noa? Oa, gentlemen are quite genteel nowadays. Lemonade? Tea? Tea, my darling Flora. *Kitmatghar, char banao*. Please take the rocking-chair, mister. Miss Gomez will give you a nice cup-of-tea."

Miss Gomez, whose bodice and skirt had quarrelled at her back, and who wore one rosetted slipper and one plain, ministered to his wants. To them entered Mrs. Mueller, who had obviously risen from an afternoon nap, and left her most important hairpins on the pillow. Her lace collar had a grey rim where it touched her neck; but she was soft-eyed, plump, and palpably good-natured. A coarse-grained man could have taken her for a wife in the Eastern interpretation of the word, a chattel, not a companion. And a spy's is not a fastidious vocation.

"Mr. Mueller is not back from his

office yet, I suppose?" Carington queried.

"He is not coming back till late to-night; he sent us word to say so," Mrs. Mueller said. "It is verree tiresome, for we were going to a concert to-night. It is a pitee to miss a nice entertainment in the season."

"He has never been so late before," Mrs. Gomez explained. "Mrs. Mueller is quite vexed about it. But Mr. Mueller is terrible hard-working; I am sure he will end by being quite a big-wig. He gets a hundred-and-fifteen-rupee a month now."

Mrs. Mueller tossed her head and giggled. "I daresay Mr. Carington does not think that a large salaree, mamma," she said. "Albert has other money beside that; we could not live onlee on his pay."

"Oa, Cora! But we lived verree nicely before you were married," Flora protested.

"I have a pension," Mrs. Gomez said, with dignity, and chased a chicken away from the tea-tray, which seemed to rest upon the verandah floor as a matter of course. The whole *menage* reminded Carington irresistibly of the March Hare's tea-party; but he felt sorry for the poor woman as he went away.

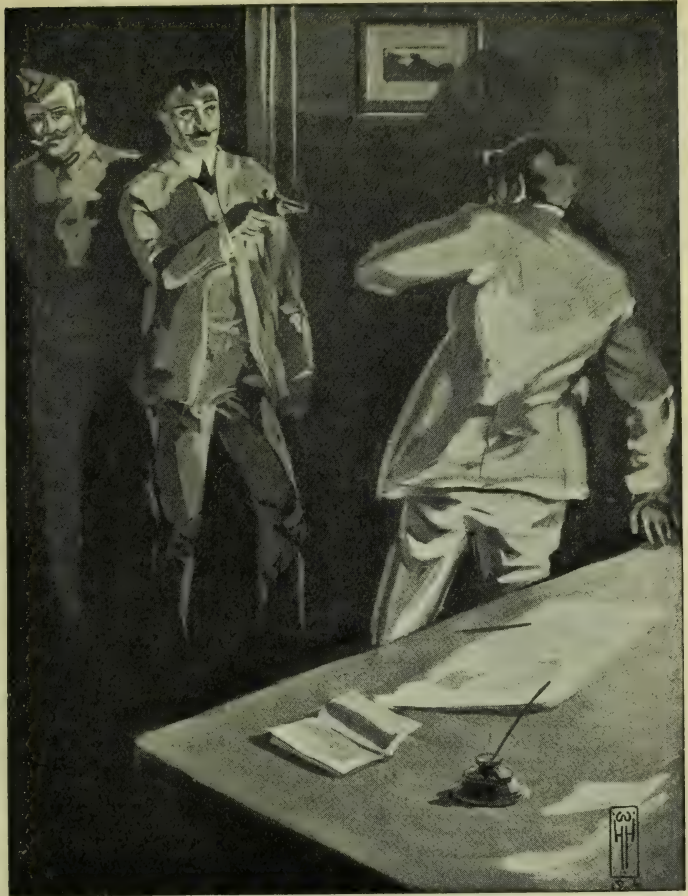
"Mrs. Gomez would have been wiser to have wedded Cora to an engine-driver, even though he were upon a lower level than the late ticket-clerk," he reflected. "Social ambition is the deuce, even in half-caste circles. . . . Bah, the brute! I'm glad he has knocked up against us."

He found Sivewright at the appointed place in the evening. The clump of pines spread its branches above an abrupt descent, and a man standing in the shadow could have let a pebble fall to the zinc roofs of the office. The road from the far-off, twinkling Mall wound up with wide curves through dense cover, and swept past the front verandahs of the buildings, round by a semi-circular turn to the deodars on the sky line above

them, and so on again to where the Government House flagstaff topped the station. It was a stately and far-reaching promenade, but it was too evasive in its upper flights for the red-coated orderlies, who had worn a narrow track for themselves far within its convolutions. Their way dropped now at Sivewright's feet to his office door, and thence, uncaught by the eye, it plunged over the edge of the road again, and was lost in a suicidal descent through the rhododendron thickets. The Government road cut the precipice another fifty feet below. The orderlies emerged upon it there, for they had explored the underhanging, treacherous lower *khud*, and they knew that a stumbling foot upon that would land a man among his ancestors—broken-necked.

The Governor was going out to dinner. His rickshaw brushed Carington's elbow, and the lanterns spun away to play hide-and-seek down the road.

The voices of his party grew more and more indistinct, and the last shoulder of the hill was stripped of life, silent except for the whirr of a cicada and the uprising tinkle of a piano from some far distant bungalow. The shadows thickened, and the hill-sides loomed vaguely in the dusk. A light shone through the window of Fulleylove's room; the two men above threw themselves prone on the dahlias and



"'IF YOU STIR AN INCH I'LL SHOOT YOU,' CARINGTON SAID."

watched it. It disappeared, and was re-lit on Sivewright's side.

"Trapped!" Sivewright said softly, and sprang to his feet. "Who could have hoped the fellow would hop into the gin so quickly? He's a cool hand. Come on, Carington."

He scrambled over the edge and began to slide down the orderlies' path. Behind him scuffled Carington, snatching fistfuls of white lily roots and dog-violets as he steadied himself, his revolver nudging him from his coat pocket. Two minutes stood them at the verandah. The light in Sivewright's room glowed broadly behind the blind, and



gleamed more sharply through the crack of the unlatched door.

They tip-toed forward. Captain Sivewright threw the door back, and at the same instant Carington covered the man at the desk.

Mr. Albert Mueller had been very busy. He had a pencil poised in his fingers, which were following the lines of the boundary map through a cover of tracing-paper. A little account book at his elbow was scribbled over with hasty notes and jottings. And he was quick of perception, for in the very second of discovery he whipped a hand to the desk, and dropped the other to sweep the candle down.

"If you stir an inch I'll shoot you," Carington said. The room was very small, and the revolver was levelled.

The spy stood still. The situation was beyond argument. He was caught, and there was no immediate prospect of escape. But he laughed as he saw Sivewright step to the desk, lift the tracing-paper and the note-book, unlock the safe, and throw into it the map and his papers.

"Isn't that called shutting the stable door after the steed is stolen?" he said in his rich gutturals, and he was no longer Fulleylove's discreet clerk, but a man who challenged his equals.

"Yes," Sivewright said; "but it is also possible to overtake the thief."

He locked the door and handled his own revolver. Mueller's face went a shade paler.

"You English officers are brave men," he sneered.

"Oh, we are not going to shoot you out of hand," Sivewright said. "Those manners don't prevail this side of the Himalayas. But, you see, we want to talk to you, Mr. Mueller, and we don't want to have the conversation subject to interruption. Now, can you show any reason why you should not be handed over to the authorities? You know the penalties you have incurred, no doubt?"

"I have nothing to say," Mueller said doggedly. "I have failed, and I accept my fate. It is cursed ill-luck, for it was within an ace of success."

"At my expense," Sivewright said. "Just so."

Carington interrupted him.

"Why did you do it?" he said to Mueller. "You were—something else once. And then there is your wife."

"My wife?" Mueller snapped his fingers contemptuously. "*That* for my wife! There is a hoard of rupees among my effects that will recompense her. Do you think I—I, a gentleman—would touch your miserable scribbler's pay? Let her take that and throw the memory of me aside, as I would have done by her. It is not good for man to live alone, gentlemen, and it was necessary to clear the official mind of suspicions. Oh, it answered its purpose—my matrimonial venture. . . . I should have been free of it in a month if you had not stepped in. Bah! but I was sick of the affair. As you say, I was something else once. I should have been re-instated if I could have got through with this." He glared at them. "There, take the truth! I struck my Colonel—there was a lady mentioned—and they gave me my choice." He laughed. "Oh! yes, they gave me my choice. This—or the mines. Now I suppose it will be an English prison."

Captain Sivewright drew a long breath. He had kept his eyes fixed on the prisoner's face from the moment of capture, and he had read the indications of hard-held disappointment and defeat that had struggled through an outward impassiveness. The man had been baffled, though not a moment too soon. The fear that had oppressed Sivewright—the apprehension that he had already conveyed his stolen knowledge to his Government—vanished like mist before the sun.

"Come!" he said, rising. "We must give you into the charge of Carington's men. The steed was stolen, as you say;



but it has not been long out of its owner's hand, Mr. Mueller."

He turned to the door to open it. As he did so, Mueller dashed the candle to the ground, knocked Carington's revolver

men who cut across his flight. Carington's revolver filled the room harmlessly with the noise of its discharge, and before its report had ceased dinning in their ears they heard the crash—crash—



"HE SPRANG BACK—AND SPRANG WHERE I DROVE HIM."

up, and struck between them with an overpowering swiftness, into the night. There was something cat-like in the spring with which he regained the free air; he had crouched for it behind his shelter of resignation, and he hurled himself forward with so much dexterity that he hardly touched either of the

crash of yielding undergrowth as the spy jumped for liberty.

Sivewright had the advantage of Carington in that his post lay by the door, and it took him only an instant to follow to the edge of the *khud*. He jumped, too, without hesitation, into the perils of that mad descent. His feet

landed precisely on to the path that Mueller had reckoned upon—the orderlies' track to the doorway—and with that he was gone, as if the night had swallowed him, and Carington, plunging after with all the quickness of which he was capable, heard the bushes snapping ten feet below. He strained himself in a supreme effort to make good the precious fraction of lost time, caught his foot, stumbled, rolled over, and fell headlong through the rhododendrons. He had a recollection of making convulsive attempts to save himself, and of hearing the rattle of the other men's feet as they touched the road underneath almost simultaneously, and then his head struck the ground with a sickening thud, and insensibility crashed upon him.

He woke hardly, with a sensation of many bruises and a pulsing headache in his temples. Something cold trickled down his face, and his first thought was that it was blood, and that it would make him of no more service to Sivewright. He struggled out of semi-consciousness, and one knot of anxiety untied itself when the drops that ran into his mouth proved to be no more than water. Then he groaned, blinked, sat up, and found that Sivewright, with a hat filled at one of the mountain streams, was dashing its contents over him.

"Don't drown a man," Carington said, pleased to see that the scene was beginning to arrange itself and become visible as his wits returned. He was propped against a boulder, and the starlight was as bright as an English moon. He and Sivewright were alone.

"Better now?" the Captain said.

"All right, thanks," Then, painfully moving a stiff neck to look about him, "but where——?"

Sivewright pointed towards the precipice that dipped from the level beyond them.

"At the bottom of that," he said quietly.

"Dead, then?"

"Dead."

Carington reflected.

"That's not courage, it's madness," he commented.

"No," Sivewright answered, and the grim look that men had learned to respect came into his face and stayed there. "No; it was force of circumstance. He had the whip-hand when you fell, Carington, for your revolver jangled at his very feet, and he snatched it instead of running. He was wise in that, seeing that I was close enough upon his heel to drop him. He fired, and I got this." He held up a bandaged wrist. "Then I fired, and his right arm went down. And with that I charged and he sprang back—and sprang where I drove him. That's all. . . . They're bringing him up now. A very, *very* narrow escape for the boundary settlement. Shake hands, will you, and take my earnest thanks?"

Carington complied, and was presently able to hobble to the edge of the *khud* and look down at the dark abyss, crowned and decked by the lavish blossoms, and smiled upon by the peaceful, light-gemmed beauty of the hills. The noise of native bearers, half-chant, half-grunt, as they stepped up the road with their pole-slung burden, insisted, as it droned near and nearer, that he who failed above that brink, lost, in the downfall, his place among the masters, and became forthwith merely a poor dependent, a thing of less power for good or evil than the meanest coolie. And it was the second time that the man called Mueller had fallen from a height, and met disaster.

"But he earned his fate," Carington said. "After all, we may laugh at the poor folk; but even the Gomezes deserve to meet with honest dealing."

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*The second story of this series, entitled "Carington and the Scotch Cousin," will appear in the April IDLER.*



# BEYOND HIS DESERTS.



By JEAN COURTENAY

*Illustrated by C. S. V. Harcourt*

"TRY another?"

"I'd love to—if it wouldn't be piggish."

"Not a bit. I'll fetch one in a minute."

He gave her no time to demur. The tall, soldierly figure disappeared into the refreshment tent, and quickly emerged again, carrying two plates of strawberries and cream.

The girl, waiting under the grateful shade of an acacia, watched him cross with reckless rapidity the smoothly-shaven lawn, now thickly dotted with small tables bearing discarded ice-plates and coffee-cups, while a rainbow-hued crowd sauntered about in twos and threes, criticising with merciless frankness the hostess, her garden-party, and her guests.

The two plates were piled high with the crimson fruit, and required careful balancing; but the feat was successfully accomplished, and the girl and her companion were soon engaged in the pleasant task of eating their contents.

More than once curious eyes were turned in their direction by the strollers, but they were too engrossed in each other to notice them.

"It was really awfully nice of you to want a 'second help,'" said the man confidentially, "for I was longing for one myself, and, unless you led the way, I couldn't follow."

He flashed a pair of keen, merry blue eyes beneath the girl's wide-brimmed hat, and received a sympathetic smile.

"You don't often 'follow,' I should say," remarked she, between two delicious mouthfuls.

"That depends on circumstances," said he.

"Does that mean the other man—or woman?" queried she.

"It's usually the other woman," he replied, with a whimsical smile. "I never allow the other man to put upon me."

The girl laughed.

"Did I 'put upon' you?" she asked merrily.

"I never noticed; I just went," he said frankly. "You must be a born leader of men."

"Ah! but it was a case in which inclination raced with the word of command," she said teasingly. "But, honour bright, I was a born leader of boys," she added confidentially, as she dipped a strawberry into the cream.

"How, when, and where?" said he.

"At home, when I was a long-haired, short-frocked, harum-scarum girl running wild with five brothers."

"That accounts for it," he remarked enigmatically.

There was a short silence.

"Please, I've lost the scent," murmured the girl plaintively, at last. "May I ask if you refer to the wildness, or the short-frockedness, or the long-hairedness, or the harum-scarumness as the thing that 'accounts'?"

"They all helped, no doubt," he replied, laughing. "But it was the five brothers that were the making of you."



"In what way?" cried she, in evident surprise.

"They kept you free from—oh, the usual girl's nonsense," he explained lamely. "You have the makings of 'good company' in you, and precious few girls have that," he added bluntly.

The girl turned a pair of lovely, incredulous eyes upon him.

"Well, all I can say is, if those boys kept me free from anything at all, they did it in blissful unconsciousness," she said frankly. "Whereas, I worked like a pair of Trojans rolled into one to push or drag them into all the mischief and pranks they ought to have rushed into of their own accord."

"I can fancy you doing it," he murmured wickedly.

"I did my best till they went to school, and trusted there would be someone there who would carry on the good work," she said, without taking any notice of his remark.

"And was there?" he inquired, with dancing eyes.

"There was. There was a splendid fellow there—a chap who hated milk-sops as much as I did, and did his best to make their lives miserable. He was descended from a long line of fighters; his brain was teeming with tales of heroism and war-like courage. He was only waiting till the time came when he could seize the first chance that might offer to go out and do or die for his country. Meanwhile, he trained his muscles and drilled boys."

"Did you ever see him?" asked the man slowly. His face wore a puzzled expression.

"No, never. But I wormed everything about him out of the boys, and made him my own special hero. Just lately there has been a pretty formidable rival for him in Captain ——" (Here she named a man who had received the Victoria Cross for deeds of wonderful bravery in the recent war).

The man at her side started and turned a dull red beneath his tan.

"Did you know the name of the fellow who took your place?" he asked hesitatingly.

"No. The boys said his name was a jaw-breaker, so they always called him 'Mac,' which was a shortened form of his Christian name, and that's all I know."

"I rather fancy I knew him, too," said the man slowly; "but if so, he was no hero. Was he a big, coarse-looking chap, with sandy hair and freckles?"

"He was tall and well-made," she replied, "certainly not coarse-looking. He had fair hair—I should fancy from what the boys said it was about the colour of yours," she added, looking at his head critically; "but you know how impossible it is to get any decent description of anything out of boys, consequently my portrait of him is a sadly indistinct one. He had a fair skin, they said, but whether it was freckled or not I cannot say; I never asked."

"Had he a huge appetite?"

"I—I believe he had a very healthy appetite; but you must remember his size and strength."

"The chap I mean used to practice sword-play with an iron lath from his bedstead, and——"

"He did!" cried the girl eagerly. "An iron lath and a cake of soap. He must have been grand!"

"He wasn't; he was an ignorant bully!" said the man savagely.

"He was nothing of the sort," replied the girl indignantly. "A bully is always a coward, and no coward would have dared to slice that soap in two with one swift blow from the iron lath when it rested on a boy's head." Her look was triumphant.

"And supposing he had missed?" he said sternly.

"He never did."

"But he might. No, I still adhere to my opinion—he was a bully."

"You are quite welcome to keep your opinion, wrong as it is," remarked

the girl loftily, "but you cannot alter mine."

"And what were your brothers'?" he inquired.

"Well—of course at the time they were prejudiced. I suppose, with their

any time, so it may be partly an excuse."

"And yet you maintain the chap wasn't a bully?" he exclaimed hotly.

"I do," she cried, her great dark eyes flashing with enthusiasm. "That



"HE . . . QUICKLY EMERGED AGAIN, CARRYING TWO PLATES OF STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM.

unfortunate temperament, it was inevitable." She sighed. "One of them can't bear the sight of a bit of soap even now, which is a pity, because nothing ever really takes its place, does it? Still, he never was fond of it at

brother was the youngest; he was frightened of mice. I only wish I could have stood for him with the soap on my head. I should have gloried in it."

"You!" cried the man, his tanned face turning pale at the thought.



"Never. Even he couldn't have been a low enough cad to risk killing a girl, though he seemed to value boys pretty cheaply."

"He didn't know what fear was. He never made others do what he would have shirked himself," cried the girl defiantly.

The man's eyes took in the dainty figure beside him. Slender and supple as a willow-wand, her masses of dark hair crowning a beautifully poised head, her glorious eyes and rich gipsy colouring glowing in the sunshine, and thrown into exquisite relief by the yellow frock and big black hat. She was a queen among girls, he thought. Such courage, such vivid life, such latent sweetness and passion! Ah! what a wife she would make for a soldier!

Then his mind travelled back to a very different scene.

A long, barely-furnished dormitory, divided from end to end by a wooden partition which left a wide space above it to the waggoned roof. A crowd of boys of all sizes standing shivering in their scanty night-shirts, open-mouthed and awestruck. In the middle a small, white-faced lad, his face tense with terror, and on his curly hair a piece of yellow soap. A ring was cleared round him, and before him—the centre of attraction—stood a tall, athletic youth, with keen, blue eyes and muscles of iron. Feet firmly planted, hands gripping a long iron lath from his bedstead, he carefully measured his aim, and, amid a breathless hush, swung his perilous weapon in a mighty circle—and the soap fell in two halves on the floor.

A smothered sigh of relief greeted the feat, while the trembling soap-bearer threw himself on his bed, and tried to stifle his frightened sobs.

It was true the boy had absolute confidence in his powers, and did not realise the awful risk he was forcing upon his terrified young room-mate. He looked upon him as a silly-billy who needed hardening, and he was doing his best to harden him. For himself, he

gloried in danger, and he could not comprehend the utter collapse of his pupil in the hardening process after the feat was accomplished.

As the man's thoughts went back to this scene—a scene which was of nightly occurrence—he shuddered, and clenched his teeth.

Perils of battle, and the stern hardships of war, only made him look back with increasing horror at that episode of school-days. Surely that boy's Guardian Angel must have been near to prevent bloodshed.

And the frightened boy was her brother! With a throb of gladness he remembered that the child had never been made to go through the ordeal again, but it was only because he was considered hopeless.

Probably it was he who still went soapless in consequence.

"And what has become of the five brothers now?" he asked, relieving her of her empty plate.

"Thanks to 'Mac' four have become men," she said proudly, "and of those four, two have died the death of heroes."

Her dark eyes softened, and a mist of tears dimmed their brilliance.

"No thanks are due to him," he murmured.

"You think not? Yet two of those boys say now that that soap ordeal was the making of them, and that it has enabled them to face with unflinching courage many a hail of bullets, from which they fear they might otherwise have retreated in unreasoning terror. The two who died were found afterwards, having fired their last shot, yet refusing to surrender, and so—riddled with bullets."

"They were heroes indeed," said the man softly but enthusiastically.

After a short silence the girl said:—

"You were out there also, I believe. I did not catch your name when Lady Ellis introduced you, but I heard her say you had just returned from the front. What is your name?"



With shamefaced look he mentioned the name she had given as her later hero, a name that had rung through England like a silver clarion.

The girl started. The colour rushed into her soft, sun-kissed cheeks, and her eyes covered him with glory. She stretched out her two slim hands impulsively, and caught his in a strong, boyish clasp.

"What!" she cried, her voice all a-tremble with excitement. "You are he!"

"I'm afraid so," he murmured sheepishly.

Then suddenly a radiant smile crossed her face, and a dawning thought grew towards conviction in her eyes.

"It is a jaw-breaker," she said thoughtfully. "What did they call you at school?"

Her dark eyes searched his face, and, as his embarrassment grew, so did her smile.

"They used to call me 'Mac,'" he said at last.

"They did!" she cried delightedly; and again her hands caught his. "So it was yourself you were so hard on—so

unjust to—just now!" she cried reproachfully.

"Can you ever forgive me for what I did to those five?" he whispered humbly. "I can never forgive myself."

The girl beside him rose and shook out the folds of her dainty yellow frock, and then with a little tremulous laugh she said:—

"Mother is beckoning me, so I must go. Can you find time and inclination to come and see us?"

"Can I!" he cried, his face aglow with delight. "Try me and see."

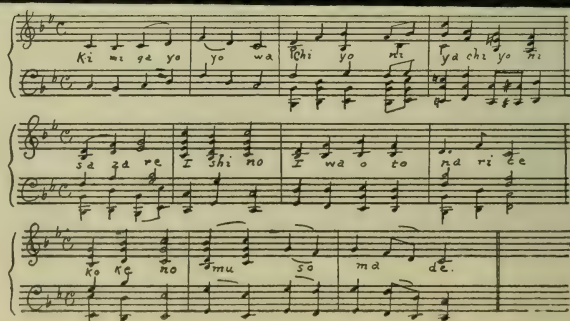
"Then to-morrow, in time for tea at four. Mother is surrounded, as usual, just now, so I will postpone presenting you to her till then. Good-bye!" And then, as he held her hand in parting, perhaps just a shade longer than was absolutely necessary, she added softly: "And about my forgiveness—try me."

With a half-merry, half-shy smile she was gone.

And beneath the acacia stood a man who watched her retreating figure with his soul in his eyes, and murmured:—

"There—please God—goes my future wife! But she's beyond my deserts."





JAPANESE NATIONAL HYMN.

*For Translation, see page 582.*





MIKADO'S BRIDGE LEADING TO THE NEW PALACE.

## AN IMPERIAL GARDEN PARTY IN TOKIO

By EMILY J. HAMILTON

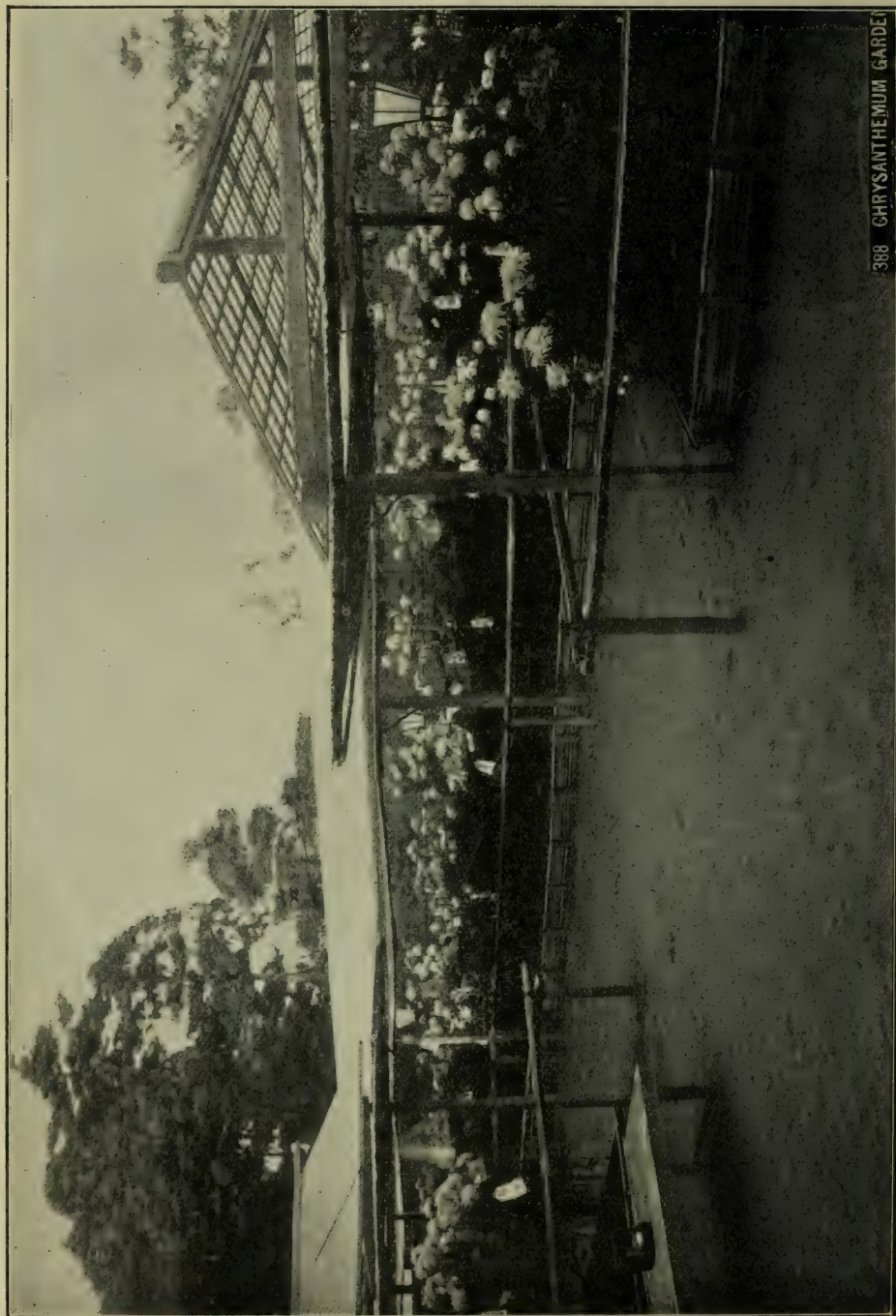
THE chrysanthemum is Queen of Autumn in Japan. Even His Majesty, the Emperor, deigns to do her honour. Once a year he assembles his fortunate guests and bids them pay court to her. Accordingly the twelfth of November was set, and chaste white and gold cards, on which the Mikado's sixteen-petal chrysanthemum glowed like the sun, called the honoured few to assemble at a suburb of the imperial grounds known as Akasaka.

The royal city is designed somewhat in the form of a wheel, and rambles over and among the hills, and tends toward a spiral form. In general, the new palace and grounds form the axle, two picturesque granite-walled, pine-shadowed moats form the hub, and canals that connect the moats with the sea and artistically irregular streets,

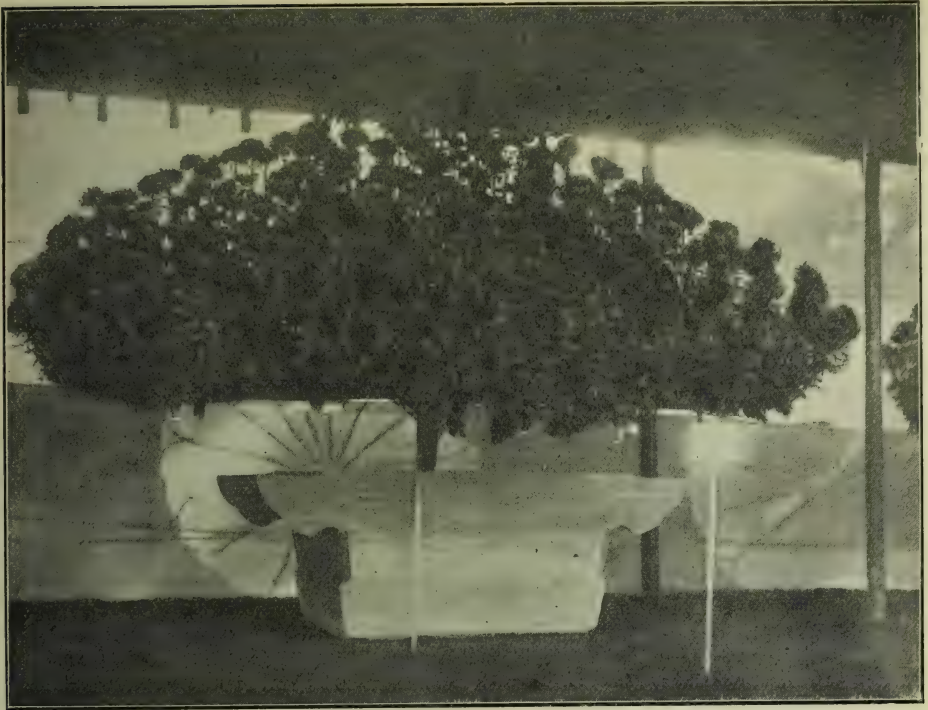
answer for the spokes. A general symmetry was maintained by the artist, who planned the city, and artistic detail was secured by the irregularity. The design on the map of Tokio would suggest that the whole had been twisted out of shape by the frequent earthquakes. One has only to examine the startling records of these events kept at the University of Tokio to be entirely captivated by that fancy.

We were bidden to enter the garden at the Eastern Gate, a simple iron and brick structure, far different from the Mikado's entrance with its moat, its castle, its guarded bridge, its splendid arch. But that is sacred.

The welcome day outshone all preceding days to honour the Emperor's out-of-door party. The sun was like His Majesty's crest, the air as clear and cool as the crystal doors within his







A SINGLE CHRYSANTHEMUM PLANT IN THE IMPERIAL GARDEN.

tapestried palace. But like the perfect gateway at the magnificent temples, at Nikko with its one inverted pillar, the day must have its blot, or the gods would be jealous. The Emperor and the Crown Prince were absent, the Emperor, in another city, granting posthumous honours to ancestors of living nobles and reviewing troops, the Crown Prince unable to attend because of temporary ill-health. In fact, it would have been "Hamlet with Hamlet left out" had not the charming and gracious Empress and the Crown Princess received us.

About half-past two Her Imperial Majesty arrived, the Crown Princess having come a little earlier. The royal procession moved to the pavilion that graced the head of the long table, weighted with elaborate refreshments. Here, assisted by fourteen ladies of royal blood, the Empress received the

foreign ambassadors and other distinguished guests, while a Japanese brass band between times performed overtures and medleys of European operas.

As each distinguished guest was presented by a master of ceremonies he slightly raised the Empress's extended hand and bowed low enough to touch it with his lips. The ceremony was dignified, but hearty, and each delighted guest resumed his erect posture to find, not a haughty despot coldly staring down upon him from an elevated throne, as in old Oriental times, but a gentle lady smiling up into his face, with cordial feminine welcome. Perhaps it eased the most democratic heart to observe that her head was crowned with a Paris hat of white tulle and that she was gowned in shimmering light brocaded silk of Parisian design.

But what matters it to tell of the silks and ermine and lace worn that day?

Suffice it to say that the royal request had gone forth that all wear European costume; the Japanese women came forth in their pretty Frenchy costumes, and the men in full dress and silk hats, or in the uniforms and medals of their rank. The Chinese minister and his attaché were a noted exception to the general rule, as their official costume did not conform to the European model.

The refreshments were served by servants in gold-laced costumes at little tables scattered over the lawn, while sweet, cheerful music encouraged our appetites. At last, stealing almost unperceived at first upon consciousness, the Japanese national hymn swelled forth like a mighty anthem—rich of harmony and suggestive of an eternal round of existence. Roughly translated, it reads:—

KIMI GA YO.

JAPANESE NATIONAL HYMN.

Let Mikado's empire stand  
Till a thousand years, ten thousand  
years shall roll,  
Till the sand in the brooklets grow to  
stone,  
And the moss these pebbles emeralds  
make.

This is sung three times in succession. The harmony at the close requiring it to be sung as a round, makes it a symbol of eternity.

The Empress was about to pass out. We formed a cortege along the borders of the lawn under the trees, where we stood, bowing low as her Imperial Majesty, inclining her head to right and to left, graciously smiling, preceded by the master of ceremonies and followed by her ladies and gentlemen of the court, walked slowly out to the royal carriage and drove away to the sequestered Imperial Palace. And we felt that we had seen a Queen of queens.

It only remained for us to pay court to that other queen for whose honour we

had been called together—upon whose whim all mortals had waited with great anxiety. For in the open square beyond the audience pavilion, Queen Chrysanthemum held sway. Here she had entertained the Empress; here she would entertain us with the finest display of her splendid family to be seen in the world. Not only are beautiful varieties developed, each with its flower of rare tint and form solitary on its stalk, and arranged in military rows under glass awnings, a silent guard to Her Majesty; but in some cases upon a single plant five or six colours and varieties are budded, so that one may see a single root bearing yellow, red, pink, white and cream-coloured blossoms. In sharp contrast with these, are immense beds of pigmy varieties, where each tiny blossom looks in shape and size, and often in colour, like our little pink and white daisy often seen scattered over our grass plots; furthermore, the climax of the art is reached in the court, where there were single plants bearing several hundred flowers apiece, so trained as to resemble huge cakes or mountains.

Among these, like an empress among princesses, stands the Queen of all the chrysanthemums ever produced, bearing twelve hundred and seventy-three cream-white blossoms on a single root.

We sauntered out through the royal park over artistic stone bridges that spanned water courses between lakes and lily ponds; out under the "momigi" or small-leaved maples that flared like torches to light our way among the dark trees and flowering hedges, for night comes on quickly in Japan.

As our human horses sped us along the smooth, clean streets in our jinrickishas, the air grew soft with haze; the early lights of Tokio began to glimmer across the water of the moat below the granite wall; and above it the dark, sad pines that had apparently lost their heads in past storms, with pathetic, wide-spread arms groping blindly for light, cast their shadows.



# Concerning a Proposal.

By Margaret Westrup.



Illustrated by G. Leslie Hunter

## I.

SHEILA was perplexed. She rested her elbows on the table, amongst the loose sheets of manuscript, and her chin in her hands, and, staring out at the grey sky, tried to think how a young man should propose.

"If," observed Sheila, "it hadn't to be by letter, he could look things!"

She scribbled off rough notes, but one and all were torn up and thrown in the waste-paper basket; for none of them, she knew, was any better than the original with which the editor of *The Crescent* had found fault.

She picked up the editor's letter once more, and in spite of perplexity, she smiled triumphantly as she read it—"Likes it very much"—"plot very original."

"Is it to me—to me, the editor of

*The Crescent* is saying pretty things? But ah, that letter!"

Suddenly she had an idea.

"Marston!" she thought, and being by nature as Irish as her name and eyes, she was impulsive, and choosing a clean sheet of note-paper, she dashed off the following letter:—

"DEAR MARSTON,

"How does a young man propose to all? In a letter, mind! No getting off with glances and half-words. I want a letter from an ordinary nice young Englishman, my hero—to my heroine, asking her to marry him. My imagination evidently fails to supply a correct letter, for the editor of *The Crescent*. (Oh, Marston, think of me appearing in *The Crescent*!) Well, he writes that he likes a short story of mine very much, and he thinks the plot original, but that

I fail in depicting the hero's love for the heroine, more especially in the letter he writes to her to ask her to marry him. Now what am I to do? The other parts I can improve, I think, but that letter *won't* come right. He *must* write—I can't alter that—they are hundreds of miles apart. But I have an inspiration, Marston—could you write a proposal for me? Just as you think you would write to anyone you wanted to marry. You see, you're a man, and would know what to say, at any rate, better than I should; so you *will* help me, won't you?

"Yours,

"SHEILA DESMOND."

She put it into an envelope, addressed it to—

MARSTON HUGHES, Esq.,  
c/o, Mrs. Remington,  
Beachton,  
Dingford,

and posted it then and there.

The next afternoon when she returned to the rooms she shared with a fellow-writer, she found his answer waiting for her. She pounced on it delightedly.

"Oh, Marian, he has answered already! Isn't he a jewel?"

Marian looked up absently from a letter of her own.

"Has he, dear?"

There was silence then while both girls read their letters.

Sheila's was short and to the point. It ran thus:—

"MY DEAR SHEILA,

"After all I'm going to write it. I've tried so often to say it, and I never can screw up my courage. I want to ask you if you'll be my wife? I know you've never thought of me like that, and you're heaps too good for me, but I love you so, I'd have to make you happy. I'd give my whole life to that. Won't you try and care for me a little, dear? You're just the world to me—everything's meaningless without you.

"MARSTON HUGHES."

"Forgive me if I've startled you, dear. I'm a clumsy brute anyway."

Marian looked up from her letter first.

"Well," she said, "will it do?"

Sheila's head was still down, bent over the sheet of smudged note-paper.

"Yes," she said slowly, "it will do."

Marian held out her hand.

"Let's look!"

Sheila made a quick little involuntary movement as if to hide it, then she laughed and shook her head.

"I won't let you see it till it appears in the story," she said gaily.

"Oh, all right. Does he do it well?"

"Y—yes. It rings real——"

"Practice, I suppose," with a light laugh.

"A man doesn't generally reckon to have much practice in proposals——"

"Oh, you needn't bite my head off. You're growing Scotch, dear, instead of Irish. It was a joke."

"I must write and thank him this evening."

"Yes; he was very prompt."

After tea Sheila got out her story, and compared her letter of proposal with Marston's.

"It *is* better than mine," she conceded; "mine is too polished. How well Marston has done it for me. I wonder—I wonder if there is any name he'd have liked to put for mine?"

At nine o'clock Marian came across the room to her. "Written your letter, old girl? Jane's going to the post——"

"Oh, no!" Sheila had given a little jump when Marian spoke. "But I won't be a minute."

Jane stood in the doorway and waited while Sheila dashed off a hurried note:—

"DEAR MARSTON,

"Thanks for letter. I'm quite sorry for you—you do it so well! But it will do beautifully for the hero in my story. I could never have written one like it myself. I did not know you had so much eloquence. I'm sure it'll be com-



pensation for your trouble when you see your letter in 'Molly, the Maid,' in *The Crescent*.

"Yours sincerely,  
"SHEILA DESMOND."

II.

Sheila flung her pen down with an impatient sigh.

"Can't you get on?" Marian asked sympathetically.

"No, Marian. Will you come and see me when I'm in the workhouse?"

"Yes, dear, and bring you a bun in a paper bag."

"Aren't you mixing me up with the bears at the Zoo?"

Marian eyed her thoughtfully.

"It's a pity you don't try to get on with that other story—'Molly, the Maid,'" she said.

Sheila got up restlessly, and went over to the window.

"I can't get on with anything," she said; "the Muse has deserted me."

"You know," pursued the other, who was endowed with her full measure of common-sense, "the editor of *The Crescent* will forget you. It's over three weeks now since he sent your story back for you to alter. With editors you should always strike while the iron's hot; they're the most fickle creatures in existence."

"I think I'll go out," said Sheila consequently.

Marian's eyebrows rose a little; she glanced out at the thin drizzle of rain falling from heavy grey skies.

"Beautiful day for a walk," she said.

"I don't care. It's so stuffy indoors."

"So it is out."

"Unnatural weather for November; I'm so tired of it!" exclaimed Sheila.

She came back presently in a thin grey coat and little grey felt hat.

"Any commissions?" she asked, drawing on a shabby little glove.

"Isn't Marston Hughes back in town yet?"

"I don't know."

"Hasn't he written lately?"

"No. Don't you want anything?"

"No, thanks. I thought he was only staying a week at Mrs. Remmington's?"

"So he was originally." Sheila looked back over her shoulder as she left the room. "Perhaps he has found 'the one and only she' down there," she said gaily.

"How pretty she is!" murmured Marian. "If I were a man I'd adore her."

Sheila went off into the drizzle—a slim grey figure—and proceeded to try and walk herself into a writable frame of mind. She shared Hyde Park with a workman for a while, then even he went away, and apparently she had the Park to herself.

"Oh! Inspiration, fight not so shy of me!" she exclaimed dramatically, and then blushed as she saw a tall figure approaching.

"He's too far away to have heard, and"—she drew a little quick breath—"it wouldn't matter, anyway; it's Marston."

As he drew near he raised his hat.

"Oh! so you *are* back!" she cried gaily. "Will you hold my umbrella while I shake hands with you?"

"I wouldn't think of troubling you."

There was a little pause of horror.

Her face, pink as a rosebud from the damp air, was raised to his like a child's who has been chidden for an unknown fault. But Sheila was not a child, so she smiled a stiff little smile, and:—

"It *is* a nuisance!" she agreed indifferently. "Isn't it a horrible day?"

"Yes."

There was a pause.

"Have you been in town long?" she asked.

"About three weeks."

"Then you have had your fill of this damp, close weather," she said, and nodding her pretty head, she walked on.

Marston Hughes stood and watched the slim figure disappear into the grey mist. Then he turned and strode away in the opposite direction.

That night in bed Sheila buried her head deep into her pillow.

"Oh!" she cried, "if I were in love a hundred times over, I would never give up my old friends—never—never!"

In the murky days that followed, Marian Stainton eyed Sheila pretty frequently. Sheila said the weather was enough to make a very Audrey pale.

"An' shure, Marian acushla, I was never afther being an Audrey! Isn't it the delicate skins all the Desmonds are having, thin?"

Marian said thoughtfully:—

"I wonder why Marston Hughes never comes here now?"

Marian was trying at times.

But the white face opposite her smiled bravely on.

"Oh! he's a bad bhoy entirely, and 'tis the truth I'm telling you; for hasn't he gone and forgotten his ould friends, while he's afther courting the maid he loves?"

Once she met him in the street. It was a miserable foggy evening, and she was coming home from an unsuccessful visit to an editorial sanctum. She was very tired. Her nights lately had been wakeful, and her mornings head-achey. She would not take an omnibus, because even pennies were getting scarce nowadays, and that morning the editor of *The Kingdom*, in reply to a letter of hers, had written that her story "Dorothy" would not appear in his magazine till next autumn, which meant that the cheque pertaining to it would not appear till then either.

So she hurried on, dodging the black forms that loomed up out of the fog, and wishing in a tired sort of way that the omnibus and tram drivers would not make such a noise shouting. Presently she dodged a particularly large black-form, and then the black form stood still and took off its hat.

"You've no business to be out in this fog alone," it said brusquely.

The tenderest greeting would not

have unnerved her as that did; it was so typical of the old Marston of happy times. Looking back now, Sheila was astonished at the wondrous happiness of those times. She felt acutely that she had not properly appreciated them; but she had. True to her Irish nature, she always appreciated happiness and sorrow to the full.

There was just a little pause, then she said coldly:—

"I am on my way home."

He said nothing. She remembered that he was always more prone to act than to talk. Anyway, the next moment she found herself in a cab with him beside her.

"Really," she said, "isn't it rather taking things upon yourself?"

"Yes," he answered grimly. "I've taken you upon myself, and you'll have to put up with me till we reach No. 15, Walsham Road."

In the dimness she swallowed hard. How big he was! And one didn't have that queer, all-alone sort of feeling.

"I don't see why you need trouble to come too," she said.

"I'm going to see you safe home," he responded tersely.

"You always were obstinate," she said, with a queer little laugh, and then she grew hot all over, and wished she had said anything but that.

He did not answer. There was a silence. Their driver shouted lustily to a man with a truck. Presently there was a block, and their cab stood still.

Sheila longed to break that silence, but she could not. From childhood she had sturdily despised tears, and yet now she was using all her strength to keep from crying. She managed at last to observe that it was a wretched evening.

Marston agreed politely, and silence fell again.

She gave a little shiver; he turned instantly.

"Are you cold?"

"No—oh, no!"



She remembered how he used to chide her for dressing too thinly.

"I suppose your coat is some flimsy stuff?" he grumbled.

"It's always so close now," she said.

The cab moved on slowly, and then the horse broke into a trot. She found herself wishing wildly for another block.

"We'll soon be there," she said breathlessly.

"Yes."

They turned a corner. There was a jolt—a jar. She gave a little cry. Marston flung an arm round her.

"It's all right." The cab swayed sickeningly, then righted itself.

"Don't be frightened," he said. He bent his head down to hers. "It was only the kerb," he said tenderly. "You're not frightened now—dear?"

She shook her head.

Slowly he moved his arm away. When he spoke again his voice was harsh.

"What have you been doing to yourself?" he said.

"N—nothing."

"I suppose you are over-working and under-eating. It's absurd! You're tired to death."

A lamp they were passing cast a sickly gleam through the fog on to his face. He was frowning angrily.

"My things—haven't had much luck lately," she said.

"All editors are fools!" The energy of his words brought an odd sense of comfort to her.

"Sometimes it's the contributors," she said, with a little laugh.

"Not in your case," with firm conviction.

"I'd bow, only it's so dark."

Her pretty mocking voice silenced him. She went on in the same tone: "I've been to see an editor this afternoon, and wasn't it cruel of the fog to come, so that I couldn't wear my black picture hat? There's no knowing how that hat might have softened his hard editorial heart."

He was silent.

"There was such a pretty opening for a compliment there," she said in an injured tone. She talked on gaily, and then suddenly they were at the end of Walsham Road—they were almost at No. 15. She gave a little breathless gasp. "Marston, why haven't you been to see me?"

The cab crawled on. She clasped and unclasped her hands. Why didn't he answer? Oh, why had she said it? Yet it didn't seem much to do for old friendship's sake.

"I couldn't," he said quietly.

The cab stopped. He opened the door and helped her out. "Why?" trembled on her lips. She drove it back with a proud little uplifting of her head.

"Won't you come in?" she said.

"No, thanks."

It struck her as so like him not to make some excuse. It was really very funny. She gave a little sharp laugh.

"Well, good-bye, then, and thanks so much——" She swept in through the gate he held open. "Pleased to see you if you are passing this way," she said carelessly.

That night she tossed restlessly till dawn broke greyly in the east, asking herself over and over again unanswerable questions, one of which was: "Did he say 'dear'? Oh, did he? And if so——"

### III.

The unhealthy close weather had changed; there was frost in the mornings now.

"This weather," remarked Marian, "doesn't seem to suit you any better than the other."

"My dear, 'tis the editors don't suit me. See, here is another 'declined with thanks.'"

Marian stuck a pin through her hat thoughtfully.

"It's a pity you can't get on with 'Molly, the Maid,'" she said.

"'Tis true, 'tis pity; and pity 'tis, 'tis true.'"

"Is it that letter still?"

A little tired line came between Sheila's eyes.

"Shure, an' 'tis that letter entirely," she said with patient gaiety.

"But I can't understand *why* Marston Hughes' letter won't do. You said at first——"

"And isn't a woman allowed to change her mind?"

"It was too bad of you not to have let me see it before you threw it away—if you *have* thrown it away." And Marian took her departure.

She came back to inform Sheila that it was bitterly cold. "Mind you put your thick things on," she said, and hurried away.

Soon after Sheila slipped into her thick coat obediently. Marston had once approved of it.

She put her hand absently into one of the pockets, and drew out an envelope. Looking down at it the dreaminess in her eyes slowly gave place to a bewildered wonder. It was addressed in her own writing to—

MARSTON HUGHES, Esq.,  
c/o, Mrs. Remington,  
Beachton,  
Dingford.

Slowly, with cold little fingers that trembled and fumbled aggravatingly, she opened the envelope and took out the sheet of paper inside.

"Dear Marston," she read, "how does a young man propose at all?"

Suddenly she gave a little strangled sort of cry—a sob and laugh mingled in it. She sat down suddenly on the nearest chair: she trembled so that the sheet of note-paper shook in her hand. Then with a rush the joy and colour came back to her face. She rose unsteadily, and, going across to her writing-table, she unlocked a drawer, and, taking from it a piece of note-paper scrawled over with thick, smudgy

writing, went back to her chair and read it through.

"It's mine," she whispered, "mine—all mine!" She gave a little happy laugh, and, leaning back, rested her cheek against the paper.

"It's real—and he wrote it to me!" She sat erect. "Oh! poor Marston!"

Rapidly she reviewed her answer to his letter, and the tears thronged her eyes, blotting out all their joy in a distressful pity.

"What must he have thought? Oh! *what* must he have thought of me?"

She ran across to the table again, and still standing—she could not wait to sit down—she dashed off an incoherent note.

"I want to see you at once. Oh! I am so sorry. Please come, Marston—do come at once. SHEILA."

She posted it herself, making no mistake this time. And then began her waiting. She went through the whole gamut of feeling in that waiting. At first all was joy and eagerness to explain; then came cold doubt. Suppose she had killed his love? It was enough, she argued hotly, to kill any man's love. She put from her the thought of the steadiness of his eyes, the strength of his face. No, he could not care for her now. Yet that little half-heard "dear." She shivered and trembled; she paced the room restlessly. She had forgotten all about the editor she was to have seen that morning. She felt glad that Marian would not be back till tea-time. The hours dragged and flew alternately.

He came at half-past three.

"You wanted to see me?" he said.

The cold courtesy of his tone braced her. When she answered her voice was as steady as his.

"I want to explain something," she said.

"Yes?"

There was a pause.

"I—you see, the editor of *The Crescent*—he—he—I mean I sent a





"SO SHE ANSWERED IT FOR THE SECOND TIME."

short story to him, and he liked it, but—he—he said——”

She stopped and drew a deep breath. She was standing by the window, and her hands played nervously with the blind-cord as she spoke.

He stood in grim silence.

She went on haltingly:—

“He said—my hero’s love-making—was not real—and—and specially—the—the letter he wrote—proposing——”

Across the silence this time his words cut sharply: “I hope I helped you there.”

She put out her hand entreatingly.

“Oh, don’t!”

“Why not?”

“I am telling you——”

He waited, stiff and unrelenting.

But suddenly her fortitude gave way. A despairing little cry broke from her: “Oh, Marston, you’re making it so hard for me!”

He was beside her in a moment. He took her hands in his. “I’m sorry,” he said remorsefully; “come and sit down.”

He settled her gently in a chair, put a cushion behind her head, then spoke softly.

“Now tell me, Sheila.”

“I wrote to you—I asked you to write—see, here is the letter.”

He took it and read it through, then glanced back at the date.

“Go on,” he said, “you didn’t post this. Why?”

His face was as white as hers now.

“I thought I had. I took it to the post—it was in my pocket—I—I remember now that there was a circular too—I was in a hurry—I went to the wrong pocket—I didn’t notice in the dusk——”

“Sheila!” He came close; his voice was kind. “You thought my letter was in answer to yours?”

“Yes.”

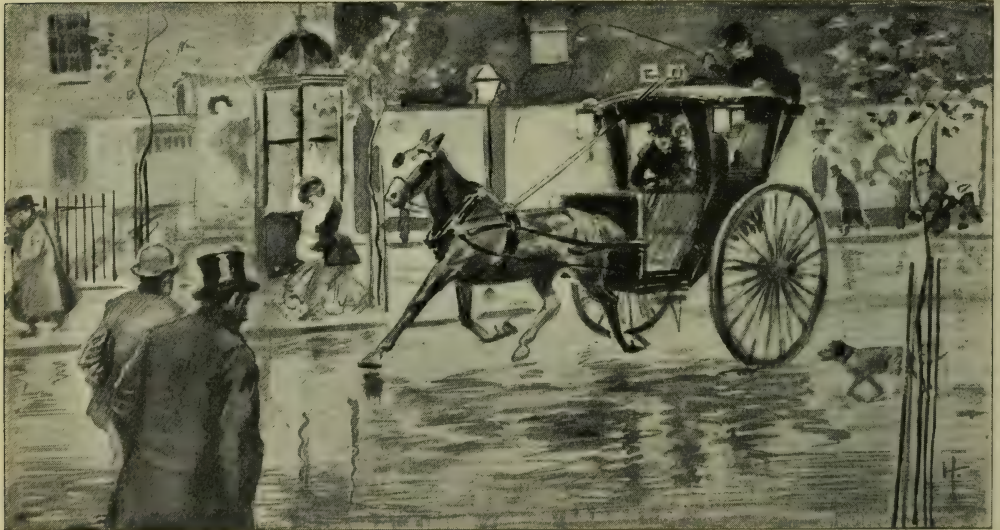
“Then—Sheila, you didn’t know—mine was real?”

She shook her head.

He took her hands.

“Then will you answer it—now?”

And so she answered it for the second time.







"HATA," OR PEASANT'S HOME IN LITTLE-RUSSIA.

## SLOBODKA

By T. P. ARMSTRONG

**S**LOBODKA is the name given in Russia to a little village on the high road. One such Slobodka there is on the left bank of the Dnieper, two miles away from Kiev.

We drove to see it with some friends who had invited us. Opposite the front door of the one-storeyed house of yellow brick, with its daintily-curtained windows, we found Nicholas waiting on the box of a sledge, in fur cap and blue padded caftan, fastened round his waist with a bright green girdle. A fat man to start with, his dress made him look twice his usual size; his cheeks were rosy, his beard spread out over his chest like a fan, his general expression debonair. He cracked his whip, indulged in a peculiar kind of shout, and away the horses sped, sending up the snow in showers about us, while we, with nothing of ourselves visible but our eyes and the nasal organ, tucked in the carriage rug around our furs so as to escape

the bitter wind. Away we went, past green-roofed houses, churches with high cupolas, and a monastery with gilded domes flashing in the sunshine, thinking of Gogol, who, in a burst of patriotic enthusiasm, likens the swift movement of a sledge to Russia hastening at vertiginous speed along the path of progress, till at length we began to descend a road that leads in zigzag fashion down the side of a cliff that overlooks the Dnieper, which at this point is crossed by an iron suspension bridge. At one end of this bridge is a little shrine, where the walls are gay with icons, in the midst of which there burns a hanging lamp; and here a notice-board informed us that, if we wished to cross the bridge, our horses must go at a walking pace, and that on no account were we allowed to smoke. So we went slowly through the slush. An old man, with patriarchal beard and in a deplorably ragged state, followed us, begging for a

kopek ; below flashed the Dnieper, as if it were strewn with diamonds, and far away to northward we caught a glimpse of the cupolas of churches gleaming against a foggy bank of cloud. Sledges and peasants' carts were moving across

We had often seen Slobodka in the distance in autumn, and had thought it an enchanting place, with its many-coloured wooden houses that are mirrored in the river or nestle amid trees ; but we were wise enough to know that it is

dangerous to judge from appearances, and, as a matter of fact, Slobodka, which is pretty in the distance, is ugly when seen in detail close at hand. None the less, it has a sort of interest. It stands on the east bank of the Dnieper, which separates it from Kiev ; but Kiev nestles in the ravine of a range of wooded hills, or crowns their heights with its white-walled monasteries and churches, whereas Slobodka is in the plain. In spring, when the ice melts and the river overflows, all the left bank is inundated, and so it comes to pass that many of the houses of Slobodka are built on piles, and approached by a flimsy bridge, while each family keeps a boat. As the houses are of wood, and always in danger from the "red cock," as the Russian villager calls fire, they bear little trace of external ornament, though sometimes they are surrounded with a filigree fence. Others are enclosed by an unpainted pailing, others again by lattice-work. A few of them are gaudily coloured, and in the

most fantastic style of architecture, as if the owner, maddened by the monotony of this lonely place and the want of intellectual excitement, had felt constrained to construct something unparalleled elsewhere, and in this, it must be admitted, he had succeeded very well. So



LITTLE-RUSSIAN PEASANT WOMAN.

the ice, and in one place the snow had been swept away and three or four boys were engaged in skating. But skating is not popular in this part of Russia, and it is said here—curiously enough—that the pastime would be unknown if it had not been introduced by an Englishman.



much for the more prosperous inhabitants. The rest are simple peasants, occupying Little-Russian *izbas*—white-washed cottages with roofs of heavy thatch—provided with yards, where, if the owner is fairly well-to-do, there is a turkey strolling about, and a number of cocks and hens, and a dog with a terrifying bark, partly developed in the course of a few years spent in the constant practice of frightening away beggars or thieves and partly inherited from ancestors, who had passed their lives in this occupation.

We went into one of these *izbas*, which was surrounded with a paling, and, pushing open a door, entered a narrow passage, where a wrinkled, rough-haired old man was standing in



PEASANT WOMAN RIDING.

a high state of excitement. He complained that he had just been robbed of half his belongings by thieves, who had entered the *izba* during his absence, and never ceased talking to us on the subject during the time that we spent in inspecting his humble home. Poor man! he thought that we had

come to spy out the nakedness of the land, and hoped by this feint to excuse his poverty. On one side of the yard is the part of the *izba* that is assigned to the cattle; on the other is a room which serves as bedroom, parlour, and kitchen to the inmates.



THE MARKET.

The most conspicuous article of furniture was an enormous earthenware stove, set slantwise in the centre of the room, and close to it there was a wooden platform that served as a bed to four people at a stretch.

The poverty-stricken moujik only strips off his clothes (except his boots) once a week—when he is preparing for the bath, which he is forced to take by a wholesome ecclesiastical regulation. Near the stove were some planks that served for a table, and wooden benches ran round three sides of the room. On one of the walls was a pendulum clock, but its working days appeared to be over. Some crockery adorned a shelf, and in the corner opposite the door there was an icon of St. Nicholas, surrounded by cheap prints, and honoured by a lamp that burned, or was supposed to burn, in front of it. The peasant salutes the icon, and says his prayers before, or should we say directly to it. So careful is he to pay it due reverence, that a drunkard has been known, on entering a room, to doff his hat to the icon, as a preliminary

to collapsing in a heap upon the floor. Nay, more, Russians about to engage in some criminal act turn the icon round with its face to the wall. We were not astonished, of course, to find an icon in an *izba*, for the practice of keeping one is rigidly observed among the orthodox, but we were a little surprised, on entering the *izba* of a Pole—who was, of course, a Roman Catholic—to see one in no respect differing from those in common use in the village, instead of the conventional crucifix. So true is it that in the rough battle of life, even religions, like insects or leaves, tend to adapt themselves to their environment.

But outside our horses tossed their black heads and stamped their hoofs impatiently, so, compensating our ragged host for the depredations of the thieves with a rouble, we went out on to the road. The news of the coming of a German—to the villagers in many parts of Russia foreigners of whatever nationality are called Germans—had been noised abroad, and quite a crowd had collected to see us and draw their conclusions—most of them women in



WOMEN OF SLOBODKA.



high boots, red petticoats, and red flower-embroidered shawls wrapped close around the head and ears and chin. The Little-Russian peasant thinks red the most beautiful of colours, and a pretty girl is said to be *krasnie* (lit. red), no matter what complexion she may have. Five of these picturesque creatures—who, taken altogether, contributed a good deal of colour to the otherwise dreary scene—were seated close to one another on a bench, nursing their babies in a fold of the dress, in spite of the fact that it was winter. The young women—not unlike boys in their short skirts and big boots—smiled on us amiably or regarded us impassively; some of them wore an astonishing profusion of bead or coral necklaces. Quaintest of all were the children, who stared at us open-mouthed, dressed in precisely the same fashion as their elders.

All the houses of Slobodka, as we said, are made of wood. The church is also of wood, but it boasts a brick gateway and is surrounded by a wall of brick. In accordance with a common practice, it occupies a comparatively elevated site, and its two green cupolas, emerging from the trees, can be seen miles away upon the lonely plain. As we passed we caught sight of a bearded peasant in a sheepskin, tugging away at a bell-rope; some women and children had assembled at the gate, as it was the hour for vespers. The *moujiks* who went by removed their caps and



A HAPPY GRANDMAMA.

crossed themselves devoutly several times. On the other side of the road was a rude triumphal arch, the entrance to a park or place of public amusement, which is known to pleasure-seekers from Kiev as "Venice"—perhaps because it is under water during spring. Then comes the market, consisting of a number of stalls pell-mell—for one of the characteristics of Slobodka is that there is no order anywhere. Each house seems to have been set up just where the builder pleased, and there are no streets whatever except the great high road that runs as straight as an arrow



VILLAGE INN OR "TRAKTIR."

from Kiev to Brovari. One of our party—a Russian—in a tone of triumph informed us that the panorama of Kiev, seen from this road, is unequalled by any other in the world.

We drove to the cemetery, which lies at the end of the village, unspeakably sad and dreary, away from the church, and backed by a forest of dark trees. On one side the marl rose into diminutive eminences like sand-hills, and boys guided their sledges down the yellow, snow-streaked slopes. Each grave is marked by a gaunt cross, its arms outstretched like a spectre giving benediction. On some of the crosses there hung a faded wreath. Few of the graves had any carven designs, text, or name; indeed, an inscription is useless, when the peasant cannot read. But here and there, in the rude enclosures that shut off the graves, there is a seat on which friends may come and rest awhile.

But the wind blew bleak, in spite of our furs and goloshes and all the elaborate paraphernalia which Russians have devised in order to keep out the cold. We shivered, and were glad to return to the market place. Sledges, laden with logs, swung past us; slow-

moving cattle were yoked to loads of hay. Here in the street a bristling pig buried its snout into the ground, or a black bullock went careering by. In our search for refreshments we reached a *traktir*, as an inn is called in Russia—a neat, low building with no sign outside. Ascending a flight of steps, we entered a room, where there was a counter laid out with cold potatoes,

dried fish, and unpalatable meat. The landlord, seeing that we were people of quality, showed us into an inner room, clean but scantily furnished, with prints representing winter scenes upon the walls, and uncorked for us a small bottle of vodka, the fiery liquid which is the bane of the peasant, but a godsend to those who have to make up the revenue in the Empire of the Czar. To temper its ardour he thrust upon the table a plate of crab-apples, the pungency of which certainly counteracted the taste of this somewhat infernal beverage. Thus nerved for almost any undertaking, we were ready for another drive in Slobodka, and as there were scarcely any attempt at side streets, Nicholas drove us over the snowy fields anywhere, now to the river to see a caravan of telegas cross the ice, now past the principal houses, which differed from one another in some characteristic feature, the possession of a porch, perhaps, a balcony, a verandah, or some grotesque attempt at decoration. The *izbas*, on the other hand, are all identical outside: the roofs project, the chimneys are of stone, and there is a bit of piping, which winter tips with a fantastic mass of ice.



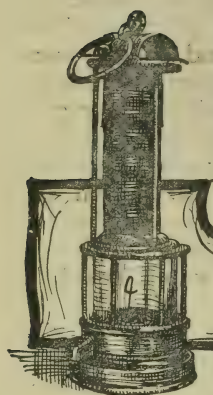
Who live in Slobodka? How comes it that such a place exists? The question is answered in a geographical sense in spring, when the left bank of the Dnieper is under water as far as the horizon, and the river turns each house into a miniature islet, unless, indeed, it happens to occupy a favoured site. Then Slobodka is a Little-Russian Venice, with gay chalets and stretches of blue water, and it is hard for the most prejudiced hater of the place to withhold some display of enthusiasm when the moonlight falls upon the canals and boats glide here and there. It is in spring that it is most evident that Slobodka stands at the nearest point to Kiev, where the Dnieper can be bridged, for even the inundation leaves an islet here. And so a village has grown up on the island, and another on the bank beyond, the only place except the island over leagues and leagues of plain, which is elevated enough and open enough to form a permanent settlement. But undoubtedly the population, which probably exceeds two thousand, would be less, for the place is unhealthy and isolated, were it not for the fact that it contains those classes of

Jews who are forbidden by law to reside in Kiev, and who therefore choose their home in the nearest place available. Driven from the island, which is not large enough, they perforce erect a house on piles. In winter they go in sledges to transact their business in Kiev; in summer they use the steamers which ply upon the Dnieper if they can afford to pay the fare, or else they walk. And of all the miserable looking Hebrews that the visitor to Kiev is likely to encounter, none are so miserable, none plunged in more hopeless destitution than the dilapidated, long-nosed, hirsute creatures, who glide past him furtively in the so-called streets of Slobodka.

In truth Time in its whirligig produces strange revolutions. Less than two centuries ago the Jew, protected by the Polish landowners, had such power over the orthodox in Little-Russia that he could force them to give him a fee, as the custodian of the churches, for the celebration of a marriage or a baptism. To-day the orthodox grudgingly allow certain Jews, on payment of a considerable sum of money, to pollute with their unbelieving presence Kiev, the Holy City, the cradle of Russian Christianity.



VILLAGE SCHOOL.



# Shinkin, the Strong Man.

*By Joseph Keating.*

R A RICHARDS

**S**HINKIN tugged at the wire rope and "knocked up" energetically. Then he leaped into the bowk amongst the others. The heavy chains above their heads clanked languidly, and slowly tightened. The bowk rose a little—a very little. It stopped there.

"*Baw, baw!*" said Shinkin, using expletives indigent to the soil, indeed; because the word signifies "dirt" or "mud" or an oath, according to the kind of situation that calls for condemnation. In this case Shinkin meant much more than the word could ever in itself express.

"Old Smoker is stuck fast again," roared the other four sinkers.

And Old Smoker, by sticking fast just then, put the lives of Shinkin the master-sinker and his four colleagues in the most awful danger. Six fuses, connected with six separate large charges of dynamite in the rock underneath, hissed and spat out showers of sparks, and rapidly burnt down towards the dynamite. And when the fuses should finish their hissing, and, pacified, begin kissing the dynamite, then Shinkin and his friends in the bowk would dangle at the right distance—about three feet above the dynamite—to get the full effect of the explosion.

Underneath lay a white bed of rock.

The lighted fuses threw shadows of the bowk over every part of it; and the jagged rock sides of the pit flashed in white points from the lamps of the sinkers. Through all this rock the owners of the Ffrwd colliery wanted to drive down in order to get to a lower vein. The Ffrwd colliery already sent out twelve hundred tons of coal every working day. But they wanted to tap the nine-foot seam. So about four hundred yards under the earth, and two miles distant from the nearest chance of getting at daylight, they began sinking. Some people prefer to drive a drift or Hard Heading (a road cut through the side of the earth) down to the lower seams. But the Ffrwd owners calculated that a shaft would work out cheaper. Therefore they made a pit within a pit. A very pitty pit, indeed.

They put Shinkin—with a great reputation in Hard Headings—in charge of the operations; and, still considering economy, gave him Old Smoker—the craziest old model of a winding-engine you ever saw—to do the hauling. Her chief difficulty lay in her weakness for getting on dead centre. Every time she indulged this weakness, the bowk stuck right in the way of the sinkers, for an iron bucket, eighteen feet in circumference, takes up a lot of room in a sinking pit bottom. She, on these



occasions, with her piston rod and connecting rod in one rigidly straight line—full steam on—budded not an inch. She wriggled like a man in a bad nightmare: aware of the awful situation—powerless to move. Her valves and cylinder hissed out rings of steam, her machinery groaned. But her flywheel stuck. Old Smoker's fit-up did not include an auxiliary, so she could not call in reinforcements to help her out of her difficulty. But every man, youth and boy in the district willingly lent a hand to get her over her dead centre. Some with bars under the crank; some wrestling with the flywheel spokes; some shouting "Turn her on!" others shouting "Turn off, turn off!" Because if she happened to start with full steam on while one performed upon the flywheel or on the bar under the crank—well, one would perform some gorgeous acrobatics.

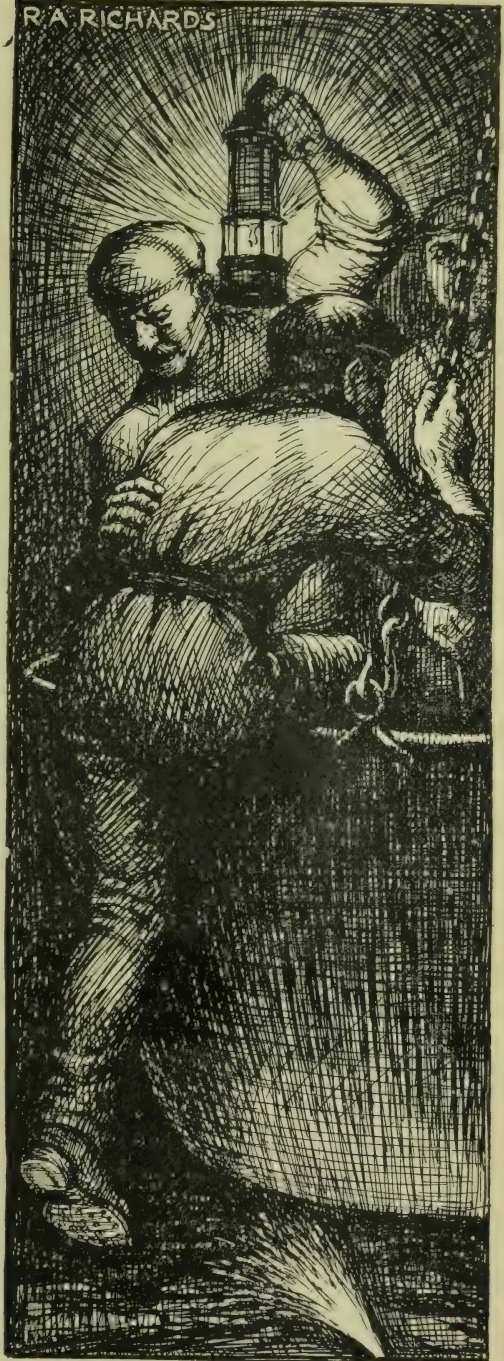
When she first betrayed this weakness, Shinkin used to take it badly. As time after time she delayed the work, he became resigned to it, and merely looked on disgusted. Finally he sobered down, and, as a rule, he and his men lit their pipes—from which the engine derived her title—and stared hard but calmly at the bowk, while Old Smoker wrestled with her dead centre. He never felt in the least hurt at the loss of a few minutes.

But now! With six lighted fuses burning down to six heavy charges—and the bowk holding himself and his colleagues dangling just over the danger—the loss of a few minutes meant the loss of a few lives.

"*Arglwydd* (Lord)!" roared the men, staring at each other. "We'll be blown to pieces!"

Their lamps flung yellow patches of light upon the white terror in their faces.

They waited a silent second, hoping to feel the bowk rise. It did not budge. Then the blood surged to their foreheads as if each man strained with an effort to



"LEAPED INTO THE BOWK AMONGST THE OTHERS."

lift up the bowk. Mere volition, however, could do nothing. A very material thing like this heavy iron bucket remained quite uninfluenced by merely spiritual power.

They looked up the shaft. They saw little lights moving wildly about, because those at the top knew the horrible thing that must happen if the bowk could not take the men up to safety. They heard the futile hissing of steam, and the creaking and groaning of the old engine as she tried to shake herself free of the thing that gripped her; and every second they hoped to feel the bowk go up.

"*Arglwydd!*" cried the men again. "We'll be blowed to pieces—all of us!"

"Jump out and try to smother the shots!"

"Too many of um."

"They'll explode in our faces."

"The bowk will go up without us."

"She's goin' up—she's goin' up!"

They stared up at the overhead triangle of chains. The links moved, but—with a slackening, downward movement. The bowk sank an inch. Then they expected to feel it pulled up. They waited; it did not move.

"The man that made that engine," said Shinkin from the centre of the bowk, "ought to be here where we are now."

He looked over the rusty rim of the iron bucket at the millions of sparks shooting and buzzing from the fuses. Only a little dark space unburnt separated them from the dynamite. Now, at any rate, they could give up all hope of smothering the six fuses. The hope deferred—the hope of feeling the bowk rise—ended in the usual tragedy of lost opportunity.

The four men threw down their lights, for no other reason than that they could do nothing else. Absolutely powerless to do anything to save themselves, they became frantic and uselessly active. They chattered and gesticulated.

Shinkin did not throw down his light,

simply because his stolid nature would not allow him to do anything without a thoughtful purpose.

"No use crying," said he, looking at the others.

"Oh! we'll be smashed to bits," they shrieked.

They ran round the inside of the bowk like rats on a sinking ship.

Then Shinkin's slow brain definitely evolved the thought that took so long to mature.

"I can try it, whatever," said he.

He belonged to the old Welsh collier class. Working in danger all his life, he could remain cool and clear-headed while others less mature lost self-control. But to all this mere cold wisdom of his you must add—what he would never think of claiming—the real fire of courage, or he could never so boldly act upon the inspiration that came to him. He really wanted to save the others if he could not save himself.

He scrambled up over the side of the bowk.

One of the men noticed this. "Where are you going?" he asked, foolishly attempting to follow; because he thought Shinkin knew of a way of escape.

"Stop there," Shinkin said, "and I'll try and get you all up."

He slid down the side of the bowk till his feet touched the rock bottom. He stood among the dynamite charges. The fuses, like hissing serpents in the night, shot fire at him from out of the darkness at six different points.

He caught the signal wire and signalled to the top to put on all steam. Then he bent his hard, strong body under the bowk and lifted. Of course, under ordinary circumstances, his strength would fall far short in such an attempt. But the desperation of the moment tightened every nerve and sinew in such a way that they gave his body for that one effort three times its normal strength. Actually the bowk moved upwards; a mere shade; but it moved. He kept it there. He would





"THEN HE BENT HIS HARD, STRONG BODY UNDER THE BOWK AND LIFTED."

not allow it to fall back to its old place. He wanted to give the crazy engine a chance. And Old Smoker took it. With the weight off, she responded to the bar with which three men tried to lift her crank. She snorted and screamed. Shinkin could hear her. In fact anyone within a hundred miles could hear her.

Then Shinkin felt the bowk grow lighter on his back, and just then he fell down on the rock. His knees gave way, because the abnormal strain nearly broke him in two. And by falling he

spoiled the best part of his plan—as far as concerned himself.

As he went down, the bowk went up. Old Smoker plucked at it; tugged at it; and tore it up the shaft at a terrific pace.

The four men in it began to sing a hymn.

Shinkin, as soon as he fell, leaped up again, and tried to grip the bowk with his hands to scramble in. But the emancipated engine snatched it out of reach, and left her emancipator in trouble.



"If only I didn't fall down!" said Shinkin.

Then he gave his undivided attention to the dynamite charges around him.

I do not know the exact etiquette to be observed when you meet death at close quarters. But Shinkin began by strangling the nearest fuse. He caught it by the little black space at the bottom, tore it out of the hole, and smothered it in his cap.

While he did this with great care, for fear of allowing a spark to drop upon the dynamite, the other five fuses hissed away and shot sparks all around him.

The fuse burnt through his cap and peeled the skin off the palms of his hands.

"That's number one," said Shinkin.

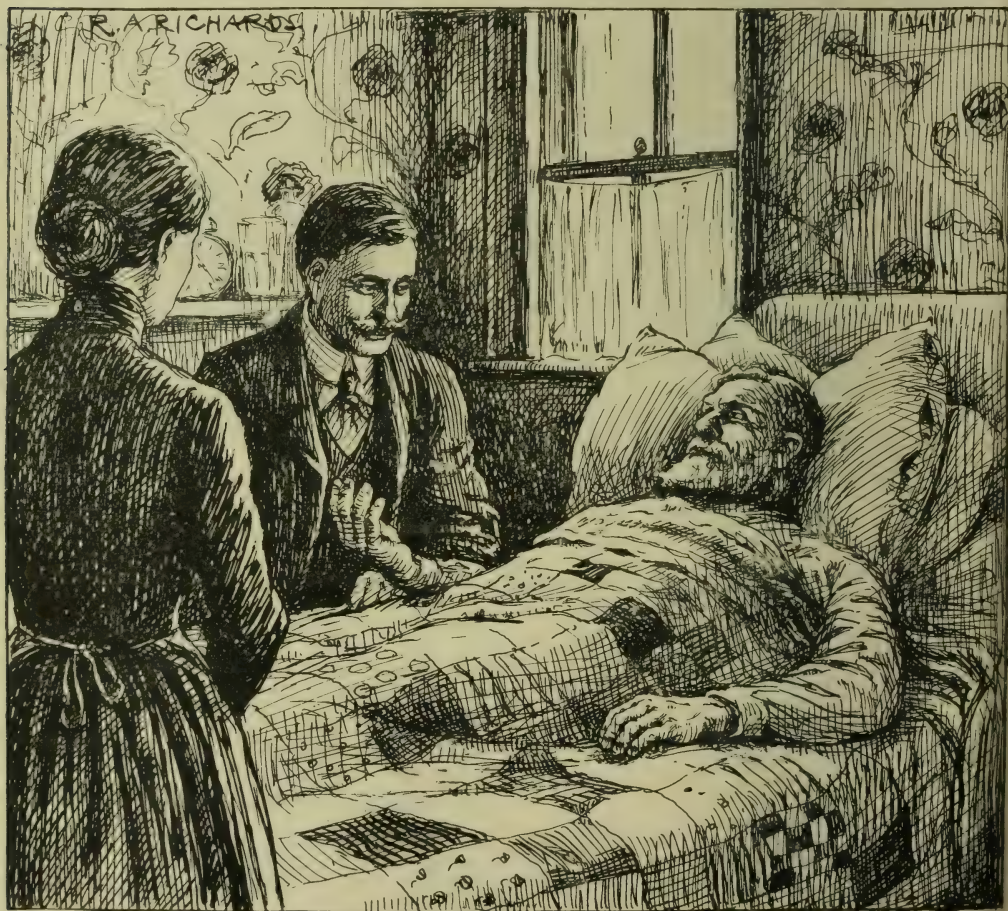
He leaped over to the nearest again and smothered that also; while his burns smarted, and the scorched skin peeled away from the flesh.

"That's number two," said he.

Number three he caught just as the last ring of black fuse began to turn red before kissing the dynamite.

"It's all up with the other three," said Shinkin.

A look told him he could not smother



"SO I PUSHED THE BOWK UP A BIT.



these others: they must fire their charges!

He ran to the part of the shaft bottom where the men usually stood during the ascent and descent of the bowk. Here a small ledge of rock jutted out as a shelter from anything falling down the shaft. Shinkin crept under it, hoping it would hide him from the rocks when they fell back down the shaft after the shots sent them up.

"I've spoilt the best part of um anyhow," said he, squeezing close into the side under the rock-ledge. He turned his face away from the charges, and hoped none of the rocks would split in his direction.

Did you ever see a charge of dynamite burst in a bed of rock? I dropped my cap near the shot-hole once. I could not stop to pick it up owing to the importance of getting away in a hurry. The lighted fuse looked too short. Then the charge went off and blew the cap up the shaft for me, mixed up with tons of split rock.

"If you had stopped to pick up your cap you could have come up with it like that," said Shinkin, at the time.

He told me afterwards that the incident of the cap came back to him very clearly as he lay huddled up under the rock waiting for the charges to go off.

They did not keep him waiting long. They just gave him time to get under the ledge. Then they did their best to blow him and his protecting rock into eternity. They made more noise than usual; and split up more rock than any half-dozen shots he remembered. They sent the fragments higher up than usual, too.

"They came down like mountains around me," said Shinkin.

When his friends cut their way down to him, they picked him up very tenderly, brought him up the shaft on the bowk, and took him home on a stretcher.

"Good job she didn't kill me," said Shinkin to the doctor who brought him round. "You see, we never expected Old Smoker to go dead-centre, so awkward; so I pushed the bowk up a bit."

A few broken ribs kept him clear of the vagaries of Old Smoker for some months after this.

## THE SEA OF SLEEP

As I went out upon the waves of sleep

I met you sailing on the mystic tides;

The waters still and deep

With charmed power, had drawn me to your side;

I knew, O sailor on the silent sea,

That you were sent to me.

In that sweet memory we call a dream

You gave me light and comfort unaware;

The day's dull cares that seem

So often sad and sickening to bear,

Dropped soundless in the stillness of the night

And vanished out of sight.

When I float back upon the shore of day

I have my burden buried in the sea,

And find the shining way

Where I may walk unfaltering and free,

Serene and safe, beloved, while I keep

The peace you brought in sleep.



# I.

"IT'S all very well, Demon, but what is a poor girl to do? Did you ever know such crass stupidity as his in all your life? I *know* he—likes me—very much, and—and I know I—like him—very much; and yet *he* won't say anything, and I can't."

Demon raised his ears into two sharp points of interrogation. "And why not, in the name of goodness?" he demanded. "Why, the very first thing to do is to discover the state of the regarded one's affections; it is the first step in these *affaire der ker*, as the poodle next door says. I thought when I first heard the expression that he was casting base reflections on my pedigree, and I fought him for it, and got badly beaten. He explained afterwards that it was French, and nothing to do with curs at all; but he hasn't forgotten, and still chaffs me about my ignorance."

The girl stroked his rough little head. "What intelligent eyes you have, Demon!" she said affectionately. "I verily believe you understand half what is said."

"Half!" he snorted indignantly. "That's just where the human intelligence falls short of the canine. *We* understand every word you say, but I'm blessed if I can make you understand *me*."

She sighed, and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

"I hate false pride!" she broke out vehemently. "What does it matter that he is only a subaltern and I his colonel's daughter, so long as his family is as good as mine, and we love one another? And yet I verily believe he would die sooner than speak. What ought I to do, Demon?"

Demon sat bolt upright on her lap, and fixed his earnest eyes on her face.

"Listen," he said, "and I will tell you exactly how such an affair should be conducted. Next time you see him, go straight up to him and rub your nose against his, and exclaim: 'Ah! what a velvet nose is yours, sir!' Then, if he is a well-mannered biped at all, he will reply: 'Nay, sweet mistress, the velvet of my nose is but cloth compared to yours, which is softer than the breast of a swan.' Then you must look coy and cry: 'Ah, sir, but your beautiful whiskers!' and he will say: 'Madame, my whiskers, compared to yours, are but as the bristles on a pig's back to the ivory quills of a porcupine——'"

"Demon, dear, what *are* you mumbling and grumbling about?" interrupted his mistress with concern, bending her pretty face down to look at him.

Demon fairly gasped.

"Well, I'm ——!" he ejaculated, disgustedly. "All that exertion for



nothing. Can't you understand plain speaking, you poor, dull-witted mortal?"

Marjorie laid her soft cheek against the rough little head.

"Poor little boy! Has he a pain, too?" she murmured caressingly. "Has some nasty little doggie been unkind to him, too?"

"Not she! *I* wouldn't stand any nonsense. I'd bite her leg!" he replied grimly. But he licked her face in forgiveness. "After all, you can't help being so ignorant," he conceded.

Marjorie looked down at him absently. "Isn't the world a foolish place, little dog?" she sighed. "Just his ridiculous pride, and two lives spoiled. And yet, what *can* I do?"

"Tell him you'll send him a challenge to mortal combat if he doesn't pay his addresses to you immediately," suggested Demon.

But she only sighed again, and gazed into the fire. She looked so pretty and so sad that, although as a general rule he objected strongly to foolish caressing, Demon stood on his hind legs and



"DEMON, DEAR, WHAT *are* YOU MUMBLING AND GRUMBLING ABOUT?"

licked per face, begging her not to look so.

She hugged him to her, and kissed the tip of his sharp little nose.

"Do you love me very much, Demon?" she questioned.

"Of course I do—better even than mutton bones," he replied loyally, and kissed her again in proof thereof.

"Well, then," she demanded, with a little laugh, "why don't you help me?"

Demon put back his head and looked earnestly into her face.

"Ah!" he remarked, "I hadn't thought of that!"

She laughed at his quaint expression.

"Yes, why *don't* you help me, Big Eyes?" she teased.

He turned without a word and jumped from her lap to the floor. Then he gave himself a comprehensive shake from the tips of his ears to the end of his tail.

"Certainly I will," he said gravely. "*O rivuor!*" And he trotted in a business-like little manner out of the room.

Marjorie looked after him with astonished grey eyes.

"Whatever made him run off suddenly like that?" she wondered. "I suppose he heard that poodle from next door bark, or something." And she returned to her sorrowful musing.

## II.

Thirty-five minutes later Demon came strolling importantly back into the room.

"Here he is," he announced proudly. "Now surely you can settle the business satisfactorily." He glanced back over his shoulder. "Come right in," he called, condescendingly. "She's waiting for you."

And as though in response to his invitation, a tall broad-shouldered young fellow, with clear eyes and a tanned face, came half hesitatingly through the door.

Marjorie dropped the book she was pretending to read with a bang.

"Mr. Montacute!" she cried, staring

at him with pink cheeks and astonished eyes.

He advanced shame-facedly. "Really, Miss Villers, now I am here I don't know how to apologise," he said. "It was all Demon's fault."

"Of course it was," interpolated the Irish terrier, complacently.

Marjorie stared from one to the other. An uncomfortable remembrance of her last injunction to the dog crossed her mind, but she dismissed it with a smile at her own absurdity. "Demon?" she questioned, looking from him to the eager, bright-eyed little animal, and back again.

"Oh!" said Demon, shocked: "you know you sent me!"

"Yes, I assure you it was," explained the young fellow, anxiously. "I shouldn't have presumed to do such a thing on my own, you know; but I was in the middle of a game of golf, and he came running up barking and pulling at my leg, and backing and going on like a small maniac. I only laughed at first and told him to shut up; but he wouldn't, and then I saw he was trying to make me understand he wanted me to go somewhere. So I put down my club and followed him. And the little beggar was as satisfied as possible directly, and would you believe it, he brought me straight up to this door! I hadn't got the cheek to come in at first, but he raised such a how-d'y'-do when I turned to go that, really, I began to think—I know what a cute little beggar he is—that you had sent for me or something. So—so I just came in to see."

Marjorie's cheeks were vivid carmine, and there was something almost like apprehension in her eyes as she looked at the self-satisfied Demon. Was it, really, just a peculiar coincidence? Or —. She drew a deep breath. "Quite a mistake I assure you," she said, rather frigidly. "Oh!" from Demon, reproachfully. She turned round quickly, and caught him up in her lap. "Demon,"



she exclaimed, rather breathlessly, "you are uncanny this afternoon."

She looked at the big, apologetic young soldier standing there, and something in his expression made her heart

Demon looked from one to the other expectantly.

There was a long silence.

Then, simultaneously, both started a sentence, coloured, and stopped short.



"DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? RUB NOSES!" DEMON COMMANDED."

throb. She smiled at him suddenly, brilliantly. "As you are here," she invited gently, "won't you sit down?"

"Thank you," he said, in a low voice, and sat down in the lounge chair at the opposite side of the fire.

"I beg your pardon," suggested she.

"No, yours," corrected he.

She bowed. "I was only going to ask when the officers' ball had been decided for?" she finished.

He told her, and, once started, the

talk flowed on in casual common-places.

Demon looked from one to the other with profound disgust.

"And after all my trouble!" he cried.

His feelings overcame him, and, springing from her lap, he planted his four feet pugnaciously on the ground between them, and, casting eloquent glances from one to the other, howled forth: "Why don't you rub noses?"

They stopped talking in astonishment at this unusual behaviour on the well-mannered little dog's part.

"Demon, dear!" remonstrated Marjorie.

"I don't care!" howled Demon.

"Why don't you rub noses?"

The subaltern laughed. "What's the matter with the little beggar?"

"I don't know," replied Marjorie. She got up and went over, and knelt down beside him. "What's the matter, dear?" she questioned, gently.

Demon shook himself impatiently from her tender hold, and, running over to the subaltern, began pulling and worrying at his legs, casting anxious and expressive glances from his big eyes.

"Get up, you great dog," he insisted.

The subaltern rose, wonderingly.

"What does he want *now*?" he wondered. "What a queer little beggar it is."

"Come on," said Demon, sturdily tugging for all he was worth.

"I suppose he thinks I have been here long enough, and wants to take me back again," guessed the young fellow, laughing, and following obediently.

But Demon had no such idea.

Straight across the room he went, with the subaltern in tow, till they arrived at within half-a-foot of where Marjorie stood amazedly watching. Then, with a little sigh of exhaustion, he released his hold, and stood back, watching expectantly.

The man and the girl stood practically touching each other, and the blue eyes looked deep into the grey.

The grey dropped first, and a scarlet wave of colour crept into the girl's soft cheeks.

The man pulled himself together with a deep breath. "What *is* the little beggar after?" he puzzled.

Marjorie looked down at Demon's expressive eyes, and backed hastily.

"I don't know," she said hurriedly. "Demon don't be so ridiculous," she added.

Demon shook his obstinate little head. "You asked me to," he maintained, and dragged the subaltern forward again.

"Don't you understand? Rub noses!" he commanded.

They looked at each other and at him. Then they both laughed out.

"Rub noses!" shrieked Demon, excitedly.

Marjorie bent down suddenly, and picking him up in her arms went back to her chair.

Demon fought himself free. Then he sat in the middle of the floor, and lifted up his voice and howled.

"Demon!" said Marjorie.

He howled louder.

"Be quiet, sir, I am ashamed of you," said his mistress sternly.

"I don't care. After all my trouble, too. And you asked me to help you," he shrieked.

The subaltern got up. "Shall I turn him out of the room?" he suggested.

"I suppose you had better," agreed Marjorie, reluctantly.

Demon got up, and trotted across to Marjorie's chair, the subaltern in pursuit. Then, his pursuer reaching him, he sat down suddenly, pressed tight against Marjorie's knees, and looked up as quiet as a mouse, his beautiful eyes angelic in expression.

"Now!" he wheedled.

The subaltern paused. "He seems quiet now; shall I leave him?" he suggested.

Marjorie caressed the rough little head. "Yes," she decided.

The subaltern took two steps away.



"Ow!" wailed Demon.

He paused, looking over his shoulder. Demon got up solemnly, and towed him back.

A light broke in on the young soldier's brain. "He wants me to stay near you!" he divined brilliantly.

"Of course, stupid," agreed Demon.

Marjorie's cheeks burned. She said nothing.

The subaltern coughed.

"Perhaps, as it seems the only way to keep him quiet——" he suggested deprecatingly.

"Yes?" murmured Marjorie, without looking up.

He pulled up a chair and sat down beside her—very close.

Demon sat in front of both, watching them with bright eyes and one ear cocked up expectantly.

"Now admire her whiskers," he prompted.

The subaltern looked down at him. Her near presence intoxicated him. He was growing reckless.

"He still wants something," he hazarded daringly.

"Yes," murmured Marjorie again.

He drew a deep breath. There was a long silence.

Then Demon, lifting up his voice, gave a wail of disappointment.

"Ain't you going to rub noses after all?" he wailed.

Marjorie laughed out suddenly—an hysterical little laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" demanded the subaltern.

She cast one swift glance at him; her eyes were wet but infinitely sweet. "I was only thinking," she replied desperately, "how much more intelligent Demon is than you!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Demon glanced over at the dusky, fire-lit hearth. Then he curled himself contentedly round amongst the satin sofa cushions, a strictly prohibited elysium.

"At last!" he murmured contentedly. "Lord! what a lot of coaching bipeds do need."

## CECIL RHODES

*Died 26th March, 1902*

By KATHERINE MANN

SWIFT through the void of moonless sky  
Thou camest like a meteor in the night,  
And men stood by in awe to see thy light  
A pathway pierce from point to point on high.  
Sudden thou did'st illumine, and sudden die,  
Flashing upon the world thy steely might:  
But 'ere thy guiding finger dropped from sight  
Into the blackness of infinity—  
Softly with prescience of a coming dawn—  
The track that thou had'st cut, the nearing goal,  
The aim, the end, for which thy radiance shone  
Had lighted up the heavens from pole to pole.  
Rest then: it is enough that thou hast drawn  
With thy right hand an Empire's protocol.

## UNCLE BERTRAM'S CURATES

By "SHIRLIANA"

*Illustrated by S. W. Cavenagh*

UNCLE BERTRAM *would* have a curate!

The parish, which, all told, only musters five hundred souls, did not really want one, and we—mother, Constance, George, and I—certainly did not want one. But it was no use. Uncle had made up his mind to it, and nothing would have stopped him.

To tell the truth, it was one of his new fads. He gets these fads periodically, and although we always argue and try to dissuade him from them, we might as well at once bow our heads to the inevitable. When Uncle Bertram really sets his heart upon a thing, he works at his scheme with the perseverance and might of a Napoleon. Fortunately, he does not always carry it through.

It has always been like this. Once it used to be window-building, and no expense or trouble would be spared to obtain a faculty for opening a window in a dark corner of the church or in one of the rectory cellars. Then came a mania for erecting new staircases in remote wings of the old house. Another craze was for farming his own glebe—and we all had to help with the farm work to save hired labour—and this was followed by his letting the land for a mere song and taking violently to incubators. Another craving was for a penny-in-the-slot gas-meter at our little seaside cottage at Shinglenook. Then came his longing for a motor-bicycle—and we had to live on half-rations for six months to save up for it.

But the worst of all was his opening the rectory to paying guests—happily a very passing madness. Then followed his yearning for a "younger brother."

"It's all very well for you, Eleanor"—that's me—"and you, George," he would say, "who are so constantly away from home. You don't realise what a brother worker would mean to me here. He would superintend the Sunday School, read the lessons for me, take funerals when I am away, throw in his lot with the young men of the village in their sports and games, and thereby gain a vast influence over them, preach on Wednesday evenings, and altogether be my right hand and fill a niche no one else could fill. I shall advertise for some nice young fellow, possibly fresh from the university, give him a title, and, to save expense, he must live in the rectory with us."

I must tell you that mother is a widow, and with us keeps house for our bachelor uncle. As long as I can remember the rectory has been our home.

We all—except Constance, who is just seventeen and sentimental—tried the usual amount of arguments, and we all, of course, failed, as we usually did when Uncle Bertram was bent upon some new scheme. But the shadow of this, his latest fad, hung over our heads with unusual heaviness, and when the following advertisement appeared in the leading church paper, we felt that the new trouble was indeed upon us:—

"Wanted, by a country rector, a young curate. No objection to one fresh from the University, to whom a title might be given. Broad-minded preferred. Offered: board and residence in charming old rectory, with small salary. Dry, bracing climate. Plenty of spare time could be guaranteed. Tennis, golf, boating, bathing, hockey, bicycling, riding, motoring, and the use of stables."





"WE WERE ALL IN THE HALL, AND CONSTANCE LOOKED COMPASSIONATELY AT THE HALF-DROWNED MAN."

We could have added a good deal more to that, we thought, but refrained from saying so. However, notwithstanding all that people may tell you about the dearth of curates nowadays, uncle had no less than thirty replies to his advertisement. Oh! those replies. Some of them were worth keeping. After much consideration uncle weeded then down to five. And then the fun began.

The five selected candidates were each requested to come, in turn, to have a personal interview; and as we are ten miles from the nearest railway station, we had to put each of them up for the night.

The first, Mr. Lovelace; a delicate, poetical-looking man, arrived on a bitterly cold day. After the ten miles in our pony cart with Nebuchadnezzar (our cream pony, so called because

during the glebe-farming mania he fed chiefly upon grass) in a stubborn mood, Mr. Lovelace presented a forlorn appearance indeed. I was sure that Uncle Bertram had tried his best to be cheery, and equally sure that he failed signally all along the way.

"Ah!" he said, as he brought his drenched victim into the hall, "now that we're home at last, Mr. Lovelace, all the trials of the journey will be forgotten."

We were all in the hall, and Constance looked compassionately at the half-drowned man, who rolled his eyes towards hers as though he descried in them the only kindred spirit. Mother said she hoped he had not taken cold, that she had ordered a fire in his bedroom, and that tea would be ready soon.

George was deputed to escort him to his room, and as he returned he muttered something about a good stiff glass of whisky being about the best thing we could offer him. However, tea was all that Mr. Lovelace would take. After he had become a few degrees less cold and a few shades less blue, at a given signal—a cough from Uncle Bertram—we all left the drawing-room that the rector and his selected candidate might be alone. The study was strewn with honey sections (bee-keeping being an embryo fad just then, and destined to develop when the curate spasm had passed), so the interview could not take place there.

I never heard exactly what passed between them, but after about an hour and a half uncle came out of the drawing-room, excited and rather cross, and said to mother in the dining-room: "Mr. Lovelace has taken a chill, and will retire to his room at once. He would like a small quantity of gruel, some sweet spirits of nitre, and two hot bottles."

Then he returned to the drawing-room, left the door open, and said to Mr. Lovelace: "There is a very good

express train early in the morning, and no doubt, with this chill, you will be glad to get back to your aunt in London as soon as possible."

Uncle, nothing daunted, speedily arranged for the next man, a Mr. Robin, from Nottingham, to come on approval. The fates were kinder to him, inasmuch as he arrived on a fine, warm day, and Nebuchadnezzar, driven by George—the only person who can make him go—came home in his best style.

Uncle, who hates monotony, had this time arranged quite a different plan of campaign. Mr. Robin was ushered into the study, swept and garnished, or rather clear of honey sections, where Uncle Bertram sat at his writing-table surrounded by the curate correspondence. Tea was sent in for them there, and Constance (though, for that matter, all of us, but Constance especially), for obvious reasons was to keep out of the way as much as possible. However, we gleaned a good deal about Mr. Robin from George, who had not wasted the opportunities afforded by the ten miles' drive.

"He's a bounder," said George, "and can't possibly do. He hasn't an 'h' about him, though to nearly every remark I made he said 'Ho!' He's only been to Midham Theological College"—George is at Cambridge—"but his great forte seems to be temperance work, Band of 'Ope meetings, and Sunday School *treats*. His chief reason for replying to the advertisement was that he might live in a rectory——"

"And pick up a few 'h's,' I suppose?" chimed in Constance, who always believed everything George said, and therefore did not feel at all drawn towards Mr. Robin.

"No doubt—and anything else that came in his way," added George significantly.

Mother—poor mother—said she hoped he had been vaccinated, and wished she had not given him the best spare room.



The atmosphere seemed charged with possibilities, and we wondered how long Uncle Bertram would keep him bottled up in the study. After a time our patience and curiosity were relieved, for uncle came to us and, with an amusing expression on his face, said: "You know, if *only* he could be cured of dropping his 'h's,' he really might do! He is certainly good, worthy, clever, enthusiastic, and hard-working, and you cannot have everything. I can't expect to get a tip-top man here. Few young fellows worth their salt would start their clerical careers by training in a remote country parish," he added, honestly.

"Now," he continued warmly, "I must hear him read in church, and, to make a small congregation, I want you all to come over at once before the light goes. If he can manage his 'h's' I shall be inclined to accept him."

We, of course, could gainsay nothing of this, but George and Constance had disgust and disappointment written all over them as they walked towards the church.

I do not want to talk sacrilege, and, therefore, am not going to say exactly what happened at Mr. Robin's ordeal.

I wonder Nebuchadnezzar didn't strike at the number of journeys he made to and from the railway station during the time uncle was interviewing these curates. But Nebuchadnezzar had not been in the family six years for nothing, and probably knew that this kind of thing could not last very long.



"THE TOUCH OF MYSTERY AND HIS INTIMACY WITH THE ROYAL FAMILY MADE HIM INTERESTING."

The next specimen was a sporting parson, the typical "run-a-horse-in-an-assumed-name," and "only-tell-me-when-I-win" kind of man. But he was a nice man, and we all liked him. I believe he would have been a success; but for some unknown reason he didn't take to us.

Whether his taste for horseflesh was

shocked by the sight of Nebuchadnezzar, or whether he couldn't stand our coffee (it *is* bad, I know), we never knew. I think myself that he misinterpreted the advertisement, or took it too literally.

He wrote to Uncle Bertram after his visit, and said that if he heard of anyone in orders who wanted training for the Colonies he would remember him. I nearly forgot to say his name was Gubbings.

The fourth who tried his fate was a Mr. Fitzgerald. He wasn't very young, and yet he wanted a title. He had been to Cambridge, unattached, when middle-aged, and eventually got his degree. His history before that epoch was veiled in mystery. The only clue to his past was his apparent familiar acquaintance with Royalty. The touch of mystery and his intimacy with the Royal family made him interesting.

But I could see that uncle thought him rather doubtful. I wish he had told us candidly what he had been. His legends of Buckingham Palace and Marlborough House would have made his fortune, if they were authentic, and he had written them up. George thought his position must have been something of which he was not very proud. Constance said he looked as if he had suffered—probably from an unrequited Court love affair.

I expect he had done something like winding up the Royal clocks. Though, if that was the case, why he need have been ashamed of such good work, I cannot understand.

I think Mr. Fitzgerald would have suited us in many ways, but uncle didn't feel sure of him. So he was dismissed, though with less summariness than uncle dismissed his other unsuccessful candidates.

After Mr. Fitzgerald there was only one other possible curate left, a Mr. Merton.

When Nebuchadnezzar, with George and I, set out to meet Mr. Merton, he said as plainly as any horse could say :

"Now mind, much more of this unnecessary curate conveying and I shall strike," and fell into his most irritating and uncomfortable jog-trot forthwith, to emphasise his intention. When he saw Mr. Merton—who had described himself as "cheerful and homely-looking"—he simply turned up his nose, sniffed, and refused to move when starting time came.

Usually Nebuchadnezzar has fair manners, as becomes a clerical horse, but his endurance is limited; and when he does "turn" it is never to rend us or do us any real injury. His malice simply takes the form of the stubbornness of a donkey. Only those who have had much to do with such a horse can sympathise. And only those who have had similar bitter experiences will believe me when I say that move he would not until George ran in front of him with a handful of oats (we always carry a nose-bag for him) for the first two miles of our journey.

At the end of the first two miles Nebuchadnezzar managed to seize the oats, and devour them. Then he allowed George to get up into the driver's seat, Mr. Merton getting up behind, took the bit between his teeth and raced home. Mr. Merton hung, like grim death, on our knifeboard of a back-seat. There are back-seats and back-seats. Anyone, not a professional acrobat, who can balance himself gracefully on ours has mistaken his vocation.

Nebuchadnezzar also deigns to draw a low four-wheeled carriage sometimes, but not for curates.

Well, somehow, Mr. Merton didn't do either, though he wanted to become our curate, and said he should have enjoyed the "quaint" life. "Quaint" was his own word, and I know he meant it naively and not rudely.

But uncle was getting impatient, and impatience only made him more critical and not less easy to please.

As soon as Mr. Merton had been dismissed, uncle informed us that he was





"MOVE HE WOULD NOT UNTIL GEORGE RAN IN FRONT OF HIM WITH A HANDFUL OF OATS."

*W. W. W. W. W.*

advertising again. It was a very different advertisement this time, however: "Wanted a curate for a quiet country parish. Age immaterial, but must be earnest and a gentleman. Interview in London."

There were not so many replies, but uncle said they were "more to the point." We were not allowed to see them, and of course there was none of the fun of the curates coming down for the night. Instead, Uncle Bertram interviewed them at the waiting-room at Queen's Cross Railway Station, allowing half-an-hour for six interviews.

And when he came home afterwards, in answer to our questions about the

curate, he said: "Why, of course I found the right man at once by myself. I only wish I had followed my own judgment before."

Mother winced.

Constance looked wistful.

George smiled and said: "Why, of course, Uncle Bertram!"

I smiled, but said nothing.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Postscript.*

Seven months later.

Mr. Mellings, the curate designate, has not yet arrived.



"HE TOOK UP THE PEN AND SIGNED 'JOHN LEYDEN' IN HIS BEST STYLE."





# THE ASS IN THE LIONS SKIN.

By BEATRIX MALLAM

*Illustrated by Wilmot Lunt*

"I WANT something to stir me up," said Teddy Branscombe to his special friend and crony, Jack Leyden, otherwise Ellison Ward, author of the fashionable novel "Dust to Dust."

Jack Leyden lazily put out a hand, opened a bracket-cupboard that was within reach of his comfortable chair, and abstracted therefrom a spoon. He held it out to his friend.

"What the—— Oh! how extremely funny you are this evening, my boy!" said Teddy. "You must really save such brilliant jokes for your next book. Think of the trouble you'll have to find another?"

"There! there!" said Leyden, soothingly, in the manner of an elderly nurse with a fractious baby.

"Beastly sell your going to a dinner-party to-night," continued Teddy. "We might have looked in at the Empire. I wanted to see the new what-d'you-call-'em pictures, but it's no fun going alone!" and the gregarious Teddy heaved a sigh.

"Perhaps you'll do my dinner-party for me instead?" suggested Leyden. "You're welcome to it, for of all the

slow institutions, a dinner-party where you don't know a soul is the worst."

"What—when you are the lion of the evening?" said Teddy enviously. Suddenly he was all alive. "Tell you what, Leyden—I've an idea——"

"No?" interpolated the other, in so gentle a voice that Teddy flowed on undisturbed.

"A ripping idea! You know how often we've been mistaken for each other?"

"Teddy"—and Leyden sat up in his chair—"if you are about to suggest the extremely original idea that you should go to that dinner-party as the famous novelist (ahem!), Ellison Ward, allow me to tell you on good authority that Queen Anne is dead."

Teddy looked crestfallen.

"But listen," he said persuasively, walking up and down the room. "After all, there's nothing new under the sun——"

"Except motor-cars," interpolated his friend.

"And, d'you know, only yesterday a great giant of a fellow came up to me and gave me a resounding slap on the back with a hearty 'Well, Jack, my boy!'"

"Must have been old Tomlin."

"Might have been old Harry, for all I care. I wished him further, I can tell you. Lord! how my back did ache. We *are* alike, you know. We've both got blue eyes and lightish hair, and we're pretty much the same build, and you only know your hostess; and that very slightly; and I'm sure not to meet anyone I know." Here Teddy was forced to pause for breath.

"But, my dear chap——"

"Now you know you don't care a bit about going, and it's sure to bore you; whereas it would be no end of a lark for me to act the *rôle* of a celebrated author for once."

"But you haven't even read the book through properly, have you?" asked Leyden of his scatter-brained friend.

"Oh! that's soon remedied. You lend it to me for one hour, and I'll engage to be letter-perfect by the end of that time."

"I don't see how you are to manage it," said Leyden weakly, "but if *you* see your way to it, it certainly would save me the bother of going, and I hate the thought of turning out. Stop, though, I always wear an eyeglass. You must wear one—do you think you can get it to stay in?"

"What d'you take me for?" said Teddy indignantly. "I'll have yours."

The long-suffering Jack meekly handed it over—after all it *was* purely ornamental.

"I shall come in on my way home and report progress—besides, I'll have to give your address to the cabby, in case anyone overhears. Where's the book? and the invitation card? This one? (taking out one of the many that adorned Leyden's mantel glass). Ta-ta. So long!" and Teddy was half way down the stairs.

"What will he do?" wondered Leyden uneasily; "how could I let the young fool go off like that? The whole thing is preposterous. Here! Branscombe! I say, Branscombe!" But as

he crossed the room he heard the bang of the front door. Teddy would be half way down the street before he could hope to catch him, and, after all, was it worth while? He looked round at his comfortable lounge chair, at the tobacco pouch on the table beside it, the glowing fire, the newspaper with "Books of the Week" temptingly uppermost, and decided that it was not. He flung himself down in his easy chair with the delightful vista of a long and lazy evening stretching out alluringly before him. Let Branscombe do his worst.

\* \* \* \* \*

"You must let me introduce you to my mother, she is most anxious to know you," said Mrs. Leland to Teddy in her most gracious manner.

As the latter followed his hostess across the room he felt, to use his own picturesque phraseology, "that he was in for it now and no mistake." However, since retreat was impossible, he resolved to pull himself together and to get as much fun out of it as possible. It is true he had found the eyeglass rather in the way at first, but he had practised keeping it in his eye ever since he started for the dinner-party. As for the book, he had read it through most thoroughly, all but the last chapter, which he had had only time to glance at, but he could certainly guess at most of what it contained. He felt prepared for any emergency.

Meanwhile Mrs. Leland was bringing him up to a stately old lady in black satin and diamonds.

"This is Mr. Leyden, *alias* Ellison Ward, you know, mother. My mother, Lady Hammond," and, the introduction accomplished, Mrs. Leland fluttered away.

"And so you are the author of that delightful book, 'Dust to Dust'?" was the old lady's greeting. "You must really allow me to congratulate you on a thoroughly charming production, one of the few novels of the present day worth reading."



("My stars, is it all that?" thought Teddy. "I found it singularly dull myself.")

"I am very glad," he said aloud, "that the book has been fortunate enough to meet with your approval."

"The novel has declined very much since my young days," her ladyship informed him. "Then any young girl could find them not only entertaining but improving. Now——"

("She's thinking of Miss Edgeworth, I fancy," soliloquised Teddy. "I began one of her books—faugh!")

"I suppose, now, it took you a long time to write the book?" she inquired.

"Oh, yes, a long time," answered Teddy vaguely.

"What a remarkably good description that is of Oxford. It is evident you know every stone of the dear old town."

Teddy was only acquainted with Cambridge.

"No, not every stone exactly," he hastened to say for fear she should cross-examine him on the place. Here he called to mind Leyden's working at the story while they were away together in Kent, and added with much assurance:—

"I wrote the book at Chislehurst, where I was staying for six or eight weeks last autumn."

"Six or eight weeks!" she said, surprised. "I thought you told me it took you such a long time?"

("Oh, what a jolly mess I am making of it," thought Teddy.)

"You see," he said with an air of explaining carefully down to her level, "it was the gathering together of the material for it that took so long—the actual writing of the book, oh, that took, comparatively speaking, no time at all."

Happy release! Mrs. Leland arrived at this moment, and carried him off to be introduced to her daughter.

As Teddy moved away, following dutifully in the wake of his hostess, and grimacing fearfully in his endeavours to screw in the eyeglass, which he had

until that moment forgotten to wear, Lady Hammond leaned back in her chair, and said for the benefit of those around her:—

"The secret of placing anyone at his ease is to talk to him about his own especial hobby."

Mrs. Leland came to a stop this time before a pretty dark girl standing in a little circle of people.

"Elsie," she said, "this is Mr. Jack Leyden, who writes, you know."

"What a pretty name—Elsie Leland! Like to like," was Teddy's inward comment. "If only she won't begin about that pesky book!"

Teddy bowed—and out came the eyeglass! His comment on this was strong but internal. He also resolved that nothing should again make him commit himself to any fact about the book. He would be a very model of caution.

However, for the present he was to enjoy a little peace. Either Miss Leland did not think it good form to begin about his book, or she felt shy.

How thankful Teddy was! "Seems to me for the first time I understand what gratitude really feels like," he thought. But just as he was in the middle of a relation of one of his most barefaced exploits, and just as his auditor was giving him a most interested and bewitching glance out of her violet eyes, who should he see across the room but a great "pal" of his, by name Harry Ross. Suppose he should recognise him, as he was liable to do at any moment! The only thing to be done was as soon as possible to let him into the secret.

Miss Leland's question—"And what did you do then?"—was obliged to be repeated twice before she could obtain an answer. But Teddy had soon got into the swing of his story again, and all his troubles, and Harry Ross and everything else were forgotten in the delight of telling his own exploits to so interested a listener. But, alas! just as

he had made a thrilling escape from under the very eye of detection, the enchantment was broken effectually by a voice in his ear:—

"Why, Teddy, who'd have thought of meeting you here?"

Teddy's smile of welcome was truly diabolical to witness.

"I say, Ross, you know," he said, with what he flattered himself was admirable self-possession, "I wish you wouldn't call me nicknames now; it was all very well at school."

This was accompanied by an expressive frown, for had not Mrs. Leland distinctly introduced him to her daughter as Mr. Jack Leyden? Odious name—Jack.

Ross's face expressed bewilderment. He could not imagine what Branscombe meant by grimacing in that awful way at him.

"Why, Bra—" he was beginning, when Teddy seized his arm, and dragging him away, said in a low tone:—

"I'm Jack Leyden to-night—*Jack Leyden*, remember." And as the other stared blankly at him, he added: "Only a little joke of mine—explain some other time."

Ross began to have a faint glimmering of the case.

"All right," he said.

Teddy went back to Miss Leland, and just at that moment everybody began to go in to dinner, and little Mrs. Leland was at his elbow again, saying:—

"You will take my daughter in?"

As soon as they were seated at the dinner-table Teddy took a glance at the lady on his left. He gained an impression of a handsome, warm-brown fringe which refused to melt into the dull brown hair at the sides of the head, and of an expanse of bony neck and shoulders. He turned to Miss Leland. What pretty soft hair she had, and how was it he had not noticed before the length of her black lashes?

The lady on his left awaited a pause in his conversation. At last it came.

"I fear," she said to him, "that you have already quite forgotten me. Surely you are Mr. Leyden? Did we not meet at Mrs. Jones's?"

"Oh, yes, of course. I had not seen who was my neighbour." ("Rather neat, Teddy, my boy.")

"How well she acted, did she not?"

(Evidently private theatricals. Teddy resolved to proceed with caution.)

"I think she surpassed herself."

"Ah! I knew you would agree with me," said his fair neighbour sweetly; "but of course she was rather too old for the part. Such an interesting piece."

"Yes; very amusing, too, in parts," hazarded Teddy.

"Well, that is hardly the adjective I should have chosen to apply to 'Othello,'" said the lady, anxious to agree if she could; "but doubtless here and there sparkles of humour peep out as the sun between the clouds."

Teddy was seized with a sudden cough, and turned desperately to his other neighbour.

Hardly had he got into a discussion on the comparative merits of tennis and golf, than he was again attacked on the left.

"Mr. Leyden, I have not yet had the opportunity of telling you how"—Teddy felt what was coming—"how altogether *charming* I have found your book. How delightful to be a great author! To wake one morning—like Byron—and find oneself famous! How I envy you!"

Teddy wriggled in his chair.

"By no means a great author; on the contrary, I fear a very poor one"—(wish you could hear me, Jack, my boy)—"this is only my first book."

"It is the mark of a true genius to be retiring," she simpered; "but, tell me, are any of your characters taken from life?"

"No—no," stammered Teddy, rather up a tree. "Not exactly. That is to say——"

Here he caught Miss Leland's eyes



watching him, and came to a dead stop.

"Ah! I see you do not like to avow it," said his unconscious tormentor, "but 'silence gives consent,' you know."

As Miss Leland's eyes had drawn Teddy back to her, the old maid's remark fell on deaf ears. The next day she told Mrs. Jones, who passed it on to Mrs. Brown, who informed Mrs. Robinson, and so on, that the author himself had told her in confidence that all the characters in "Dust to Dust" were drawn from people who really existed. But this is digression.

"Mr. Leyden?"

Teddy became aware that Mrs. Leland was addressing him across the table, and that there seemed to be an animated discussion going on around her.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Did Lady Flo kill Aurelia in 'Dust to Dust,' or did Aurelia die of heart disease? Take pity on our ignorance and enlighten us."

"Must have been in the end chapter," thought Teddy. "Where I left off Aurelia was just going to be married, and Lady Flo was to be her bridesmaid." Aloud he said:—

"At one time I—er—I *meant* Lady Flo to kill Aurelia, and another time Aurelia to die, so as I couldn't determine which was best, I ended by leaving it so that the reader could take his choice."

"So ingenious!" "Capital idea!" &c., &c., followed on Teddy's rather confused statement. How true it is that "the King can do no wrong."

"What did the hero's real name turn out to be? I declare I have forgotten," exclaimed another guest. Anything to draw out the lion of the evening.

"I had no idea that chapter contained so much," thought their hapless victim. A brilliant idea struck him.

"That's not very complimentary to my poor book!" he said; then with fiendish glee added:—

"But I have no doubt Mrs. Leland



"I'M JACK LEYDEN TO-NIGHT—JACK LEYDEN, REMEMBER."

can enlighten you." ("That's in return for introducing me to that old cat!" he muttered.) "Please don't say you've forgotten too, Mrs. Leland, or I shall sink to the earth with abasement."

Teddy had successfully disposed of that question, and thenceforth was allowed to eat his dinner and talk to Miss Leland in peace. After the ladies had left the room, however, one of the men suddenly asked him who were his publishers, as he had tried to get the book and failed.

Teddy gasped, then rose, as usual, equal to the occasion:—

"If you will oblige me with your address, I will see that a copy is sent to you to-morrow," he said graciously.

At last they went back to the drawing-room, and Teddy, unable to get to Miss Leland, was talking to an old gentleman—not on the subject of "Dust to Dust"—when Harry Ross passed.

Teddy, thinking that, after the hint he had given him, Ross must be quite safe, unwisely asked his opinion on something he and the old gentleman were discussing.

"I beg your pardon, Branscombe?" said Ross, then, catching the other's agonised expression, muttered: "I forgot!" to make things better.

Teddy was at his wits' end. Internally he sent his friend to a climate somewhat warmer than that of England, and then did his best to cover his own and Ross's confusion by asking the latter questions and answering them himself. When Ross had gone, he said carelessly to the other:—

"Stupid fellow! I once acted the part of a man called 'Branscombe' in some private theatricals, and he has called me by that name ever since."

The old man offered no comment, and Teddy felt "deuced awkward." To crown all, he discovered at this moment—or thought he did—that Miss Leland had once more fastened that surprised look upon him as on the occasion at dinner. He reddened to the tips of his

ears—and when Teddy's fair skin blushed there was no concealing the fact.

For one wild moment he determined to tell her everything, but the next convinced him that matters were not yet in quite such a desperate state.

He moved to her side, and began talking on a subject very far removed from the matter, and very confidential, to judge from the low tones it required. Harry Ross, watching from afar, presently saw her get up and trip away to a side table, followed by Teddy. She had insisted on his writing his name in her autograph book!

With a gleam of mischief in her eye (as Teddy thought), she gravely sought for a pen.

"Do you prefer a thick nib or a fine one?" she asked of him.

Without thinking, Teddy said:—

"A thick one, please."

He took up the pen and signed "John Leyden" in his best style.

"Why!" said Elsie Leland, peeping over his shoulder, "you signed 'Jack' in mamma's book. I thought perhaps you were christened it—many people are, you know."

Teddy had been a little too clever this time, for he remembered with a sudden qualm that Leyden always *did* sign himself "Jack"; however, it really could not matter.

"And oh, how you have changed your writing since last week when you wrote in mamma's album—look!" And she took up another book, and, opening it, showed him "Jack Leyden" in a thin, elegant hand, very different to his bold, black scrawl.

For the second time that evening Teddy's face vied with the peony in hue.

In this moment of confusion I am sorry to say he relapsed into slang.

"Well! I suppose I must throw up the sponge!" he said, as a glance at Miss Leland's arch face showed him that he was discovered.

"Come away over here," indicating a



sofa, "and I'll confess everything to you, but you won't be very hard on a fellow, will you? And for goodness sake don't breathe a word of it to any of the others or I'll get into an *awful* row."

"I think," said Elsie Leland, "that a minute account of it all, with fullest particulars, is the only way of getting a pardon from me." She was very stern about it, but her eyes were dancing.

"Tell me," asked the elastic Teddy, already beginning to enjoy himself again, "however *did* you guess it?"

"It wasn't so very difficult," she said demurely, "and sums were my strong point at school, so you see I just put two and two together."

\* \* \* \* \*

TIME.—*Two years later.*

SCENE.—*A cosy drawing-room.*

*A pretty dark-haired girl is leaning forward in her chair, over the fire, and talking to a fair-haired man in a frock coat.*

"You remember that evening when Ted masqueraded as you at mamma's dinner party?" she asks, turning two deep violet eyes on her visitor. "I have always wanted to hear your account of what he told you when he came back from it?"

"Well, let me see! He came in a little before twelve, and seemed in capital spirits——"

"When is he not?" she said, and they both laughed.

"And he told me 'he'd had a ripping time and met the pret——' ahem! I asked in much anxiety whether it had all gone off smoothly? and he said airily that 'there had been one or two small hitches, but that thanks to his usual presence of mind he had come off with flying colours.'"

"Just Ted all over," cried she.

"I said I was glad it *had* gone off well, and glad he had come in, too, and he said 'that's just what your eyeglass has done—come in two—hope you don't mind?' and I couldn't get anything more out of him at all. It was most disappointing, I remember, for I expected a long and particular account of it all."

At this moment the door opened and our old friend Teddy himself appeared.

"Why, wonder of wonders!" he cried, "here's Jack the Silent talking! What may have been the interesting topic?"

"You, dear," said his wife.

"That explains it," said Teddy.

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## THE COMFORTER

WHEN all the clouds are dark and blue,  
And fate is playing tag with you,  
Don't stop to think how hard you're hit:  
Just light your pipe and smoke a bit.

When all your ships are cast ashore,  
And Trouble's knocking at the door,  
You mustn't think it's time to quit:  
Just light your pipe and smoke a bit.

## A DANGEROUS RUFFIAN

By F. HARRIS DEANS

SHE was an absolutely charming little lady. In a dress of some soft clinging white material, she swung idly to and fro on the gate, dangling a large garden hat in her hand.

First she gazed demurely at her reflection in a small pocket mirror; then she looked down the road in the direction of the railway station; and then she sighed.

"He's a dreadfully long time coming," she murmured, disconsolately; "and so is papa."

As she looked down the road again, the figure of a young man met her eye. She had some reason for her stare of astonishment. Dressed in a light grey summer suit, with an utterly incongruous silk hat perched on the back of his head, he was running as if for his life. As he drew near she observed, despite the hunted expression on his face, that he was good looking.

On reaching the gate, he paused and gazed despairingly down the empty road.

"I say, please," he gasped, catching her eye, "don't give me away. They're chasing me, but it's not my fault, really. I'll explain afterwards."

Giving her an entreating glance, he darted through the half-open gate and made for a summer house near by.

The girl stood hesitating for a minute, and then followed him slowly. Before she could reach his place of refuge, the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps checked her. Turning, she saw the local policeman stop breathlessly at the gate.

"What's the matter, Simms?" she queried.

"Chasin' a thief, Miss. Haven't sin nobody pass, have you, Missie?"

"Was he wearing a silk hat?" she inquired.

"That's 'im, Miss. Have you sin 'im?"

A subdued groan came from the summer house.

"Yes," said the girl, with a sudden resolution, "he was running up the road. He's just passed."

"All right, Parker," roared the policeman to someone behind; "he's in front."

So saying, he started off once more, followed by a porter, who now came on the scene.

The girl opened her mouth, paused, and shut it with a sudden snap, and walked resolutely up to the summer house.

As she entered and saw the runaway crouched under the seat with his head poked out, still with the absurd silk hat on, she began to laugh helplessly.

"Oh, I say," said the young man, in a pained tone. "Don't laugh at a fellow."

"But you look so funny," she protested, bubbling over.

The young man rose and assumed a more dignified position. "Really," he began, in an offended tone.

"Do take that absurd hat off," entreated the girl, shaking with suppressed mirth.

Removing his hat, the young man looked at it solemnly, and then deliberately kicked it into the middle of the field.

Turning and seeing the girl's amazed look, he shrugged his shoulders and leant moodily against the door-post.

"What were you running away for?" she demanded.

"That!" he replied, nodding his head at the battered head-gear.

"But why?"

"I stole it!" he declared.

"Oh! You don't look that sort of person," she remarked, curiously, after a pause.

"I'm not—not really, you know. You



see, it's like this. I've come down on a visit."

"Without a hat?"

"Oh, no! I had a hat to start with—my own," he put in hurriedly, as she began to smile again, "and I dropped it out of the carriage window on the way down. You may think it's funny, but it's not. Well, at the next station I got out and tried to buy one; but they don't sell them in the refreshment bar."

"Really?"

"Fact. Oh, I see, you're chaffing me. I got back into the wrong carriage, and—and I saw that thing in the rack"—he glared ferociously at the hat—"so I took it. And you'd have done the same if you had been in my place, with a scorching sun like this!" he cried, with sudden vehemence.

"We're talking about what *you* did, not what I might have done," said the girl, reprovingly. "Get on with the story."

"Well, no sooner had I got past the barrier," he resumed, "than I heard somebody yell out, 'Stop him!' So of course I bolted, and——"

"And here you are."

"Yes," he assented, with a smile, settling himself comfortably, "and here I am."

"Now what are you going to do, pray?"

"Stop here," he returned, readily.

"But they'll come back presently and search the place."

"Not if you go and tell them I'm not here. You might as well make a good job of it," he warned her.

The girl laughed softly.

"I wonder you don't become a professional," she cried, admiringly. "You're too good for an amateur. Not only do you commit a crime yourself, but you actually make me an accomplice."

"In the first instance——" he began.

"You made me tell a fib," she broke in, warmly. "You did—you know you did. Didn't you?" she cried, appealingly.

"All right—I did," he asserted, brazenly. "With a desperate and ferocious ruffian a few feet away you had no option."

"Of course," murmured the girl, with a smile of relief, "I really had no choice."

"But now?"

"You're still as ferocious as ever, aren't you?"

"More so," he affirmed. "I'm——"

"H'sh," whispered the girl, "here's somebody else."

Putting her finger to her lips warningly, she stole to the door.

"Papa!" she screamed, running to the gate.

A startled expression came into the fugitive's eyes, but he retained his seat with the calmness of despair.

There was a subdued murmur of voices outside, and then the footsteps continued up the road. Presently the girl came back alone.

"Well?" he said.

"It was papa's hat," said the girl, with downcast eyes. "He's—he's following the others."

"Do you mean to say that you have actually sent your respected father on a wild goose chase?" he demanded, severely.

The girl looked alarmed for a minute, and then she smiled roguishly. "Yes!" she assented gently.

"It's rather funny isn't it," remarked the young man cheerfully, "that they should be chasing me up the road when I'm here all the time?"

"They'll come back presently, you know."

"Do you think so?" he asked anxiously.

"Positive. When they question people and find you're *not* in front, they are bound to return and search all the likely hiding places."

"Surely," he ventured to observe, "this doesn't come under that head."

"What do you mean?"

"In his own summer house," he

murmured as if to himself; "among his own people."

The girl sprang to her feet.

"Have you no gratitude?" she cried, indignantly.

"Still it is possible," he decided, waiving the question.

He rose to his feet with a sigh.

The girl glanced at him out of the corner of her eye.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know. Out into the cold hard world once more I suppose, to battle with mine enemies."

"You're a good runner at all events," said the girl, bitingly.

"I can do more than run," he returned with subdued ferocity. "For the sake of your father," he cried, turning to the girl imploringly; "he is an old man. I shan't be able to answer for the consequences if I am caught."

The girl looked at him mischievously.

"I shan't be able to answer for the consequences if papa catches you," she retorted.

The young man abandoned his warlike attitude, and gazed at her beseechingly.

"I suppose papa would recognise you again?" she said, thoughtfully.

"I didn't see *him* at all. I doubt if he saw more than my back. But there's the hat of course."

"But in any case you can't remain here for ever."

"I suppose not," he agreed, sadly. "But then of course there's my uncle. The people I'm visiting you know."

"Well, I can't make you go if you won't," said the girl weakly, throwing a sop to her conscience.

The young man resumed his seat, and again there was a pause.

"You've got a snug little place here," he remarked, looking admiringly round. "Cupboard—bookshelf—and all the rest."

"Yes," returned the girl, "papa had it built out here away from the house especially for me."

"I say," he gasped in an alarmed tone,

taking a volume down from the shelf, "you don't read Browning, do you?"

"Papa gave it to me," explained the girl in self defence.

"Oh! 'To Connie, from her loving father on her nineteenth birthday.' I beg your pardon; but I've got a cousin named Connie. I've come down to see her for the first time."

"Connie?" murmured the girl. "I don't know—is—is your name Hammond?" she cried, as if seeing light.

Reading the answer in the young man's startled eyes, she rippled with laughter.

"Jove!" he gasped. "You! My uncle's hat! Oh, Lord!"

Before the girl could reply, a step was heard outside, and a stout red-faced perspiring gentleman appeared in the doorway.

"Hullo, Dick," he cried, "discovered Connie, eh! I didn't see you at Victoria, though I looked out for you. I thought you'd find your way down all right."

"Yes, papa," cried the girl hysterically; "and—and Dick's lost *his* hat too."

"Ha!" roared her father, fiercely. "Some infernal scoundrel stole my hat. I left it in the carriage when I got into another compartment to speak to somebody, and when I got out at this station it was gone."

"Did you see who took it?" inquired his nephew, anxiously.

"No, but I saw his figure making off with it and gave chase."

"Where is he now?"

"The ruffian gave us the slip somewhere. Well, well, never mind," he said, mopping his heated brow. "Now my boy you'd better come up to the house and be introduced to your aunt."

When they reached the house, the girl, who had dropped behind, joined them with her big summer hat doubled round something.

"It's the hat," she whispered aside to Dick. "I'm going to burn it. Papa is *so* fiery."



## WILLIAM SHENWELL, ACTOR

By SIDNEY ALTON

**W**ILLIAM SHENWELL, a favourite actor during the first decade of the eighteenth century, was hurrying westward along the Mall, one bleak afternoon in March. Short showers of snow fell every few minutes, and the cold north-east wind nipped every nose and ear, which their owners ventured out, until all feeling was lost in those necessary appendages.

Although these portions of the actor's anatomy were as red as a peony, he had got as much of himself as he possibly could tucked away in his great coat, yet he went along with a smile coming and going about his loose mouth.

He turned off the Mall to the north, and walked quickly along until he came to King Street. At No. 6 he stopped, looked up at the house, took out a piece of paper from somewhere inside his coat, examined it, then knocked at the door. It was opened by a woman.

"Is Sir Robert Tufton in?" asked the little man.

The woman told him he was not in just then, but that she was expecting him back in a few minutes, and asked him if he would wait.

He decided to wait, and was shown up into Sir Robert's rooms. For some time he sat by a cheerful fire, still smiling contentedly to himself with his hands stretched out towards the fire.

After he had sat there for nearly half-an-hour, all the while listening intently, there was a knock, and shortly afterwards he heard footsteps ascending the stairs.

The door opened, and with a profound bow a young man entered. He was a handsome, well-built young fellow. The actor arose and bowed in

return, but with a suggestion of frigidity. He looked quite a miniature by the side of the other, for the actor was a little, thin, sharp-featured man.

"To what good fortune am I indebted for this great honour?" asked Sir Robert with a quizzical smile at his little visitor.

"I doubt, sir," majestically replied the actor—he had a fine voice—"if you will appreciate the honour when I explain the reason of my intrusion."

"An honour it will be, whatever the reason, which methinks can scarcely be unpleasant, seeing we are strangers."

"A truce to these extravagant phrases, Sir Robert."

"Ecod! You have my name pat enough, and since you know it so well, permit me to have the honour of my visitor's name."

"Sir Thomas Hindford," the little man replied stiffly.

"I haven't the pleasure of knowing your name, but I have only returned from the Embassy at Hague within the last week, and know but little of London's doings, so I pray you excuse my ignorance."

"Sufficient has been said, sir. My visit is soon explained. I have come to request an apology on behalf of a lady you insulted yesterday afternoon in the Mall. You know the lady. I will not mention her name in your presence."

"Zounds, sir! I beg you to consider what you are saying. I am not in the habit of insulting ladies." Sir Robert's face flushed with passion.

"A murrain on your blustering; so you add cowardice to your other inestimable qualities," sneered the actor.

"As to being a coward, sir, my sword must answer that, and I desire no further speech with you save that my

second will await your pleasure at eight to-night at any address you may give."

"Be it so ; 7, Duke Street, will find me." The actor strode out of the room, a miniature of righteous indignation.

The young man sat down by his fire and laughed. "He evidently mistakes me for someone else," he confided to the fire. "But no matter ; I'm in for it now, so must go out to arrange with George. A funny home-coming this." He laughed again.

Meanwhile the actor made off quickly towards Duke Street, looking even more satisfied than before, with the bloom, which had disappeared while waiting by the fire, fast returning.

It had not assumed anything like its previous perfection when he arrived at 7, Duke Street, as it was only a short distance from King Street.

He knocked at the door, and, when it was opened, inquired if Sir Thomas Hindford were in.

He was, and the actor was conducted upstairs and announced as Sir Robert Tufton.

Both men bowed low. Sir Thomas was a fine specimen of a young Englishman—tall, straight, and with a plain but strong face. He drew up a chair, and with extended arm and another bow, he offered his visitor a seat, asking the nature of his business.

"I'm told you know Kathy Seymour, the little actress, mighty well, and, between ourselves, I find my heart needs an introduction," said the actor with a snigger.

"Your informant was misinformed," Sir Thomas replied with an indulgent smile. "I but returned to London last week, and don't remember hearing the name of this no doubt charming young lady."

"Sir Thomas"—the little man rose tragically—"you are pleased to laugh at me."

"It isn't my habit to laugh at those who honour me with a visit," the young man replied haughtily.

"A pest upon you, sir ! Are you afraid you may lose the dear child ?"

The young man's blood was up, and he retorted : "I should not fear losing any girl by any attraction you could offer."

"Sir, you insult me !" shrieked the little actor.

"Your understanding is your own," with a contemptuous shrug.

"Pray make it convenient to receive a friend of mine at eight this evening."

"Delighted !" The young man bent frigidly.

The actor bounced out of the room, a fine picture of wrath in a small way ; he was a good actor.

Sir Thomas was left somewhat amazed, and stood staring at the door for a short time ; then he turned with a laugh.

"There's some mistake," he said to the glass, as he arranged himself leisurely. "But I'm not afraid of any man's sword. But what a little hop-o'-my-thumb !"

The little actor was scuttling along towards the Mall humming a little song to himself, not of the highest moral tone, but a favourite at that time throughout London.

The next morning broke cold and grey ; at seven o'clock the snow was falling fast, and was blown along in clouds by the biting north-east wind.

Among a group of beeches in Hyde Park two men walked rapidly to and fro side by side.

"It must be about the hour, George," the taller of the two said.

"It must be, and by the Lord Harry, I wish they would be quick. It's bitter cold."

"It is ; I'm all of a shiver. It won't be such a bad change for the one who's pinked. Here they come." The first speaker stopped and looked through the snow. Two tall men approached them.

"Zounds ! it isn't they, George ; but they're stopping."

They did stop, and whispered together,



then, after a few seconds, one of them stepped up to the first arrivals, and, with a stately bow, said :—

“ Pardon me, gentlemen, for this intrusion, but I may guess, perhaps, you are here for the same purpose as we ? ”

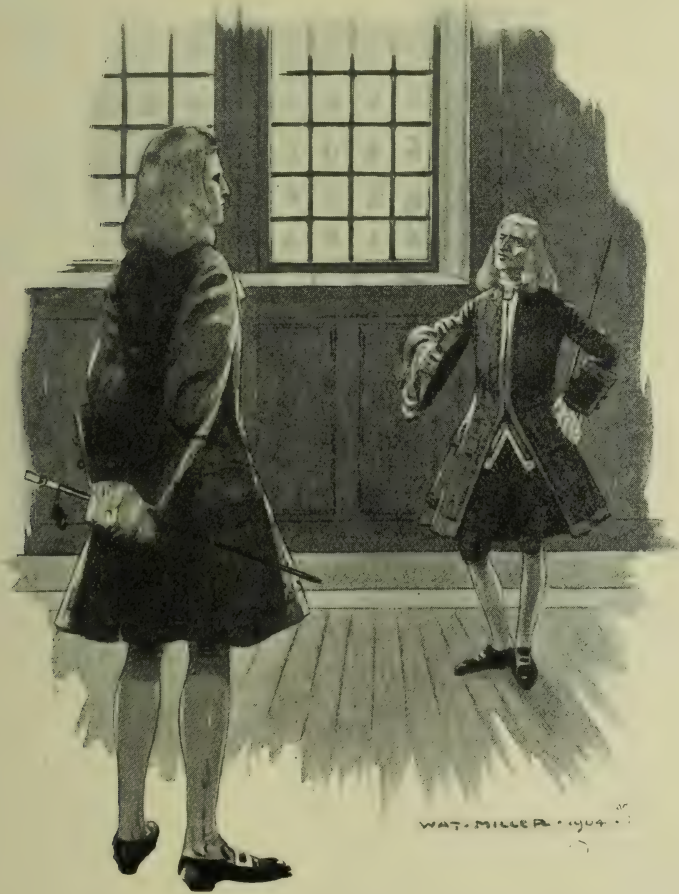
“ I expect your guess is as shrewd as

spot. Pray excuse our presence until then.”

“ We shall be honoured, sir,” with a sweeping bow.

The last arrival, after bowing too, returned to his companion.

The snow continued to fall, and the



“ ‘ SIR THOMAS HINDFORD,’ THE LITTLE MAN REPLIED STIFFLY.”

it is cold,” returned the taller of the other pair.

“ May I be allowed to inquire at what time your opponent is due ? ”

“ Seven.”

“ That is the same time as we have fixed upon ; but directly my opponent arrives I will arrange another

cold grey light made the scene look very weird as they waited in the piercing wind. Up and down they tramped, trying to keep warm, cursing inwardly or to their companions. For some time they marched so, like four tigers in a cage, when the whole four stopped and faced one another.

"Methinks, sir," said the first arrival, "our opponents are a pair of cowardly knaves."

"You never spoke truer words."

"And yet the man bears an honourable name, I find."

"So does mine—a member of the Embassy at Hague, just returned."

"What, sir!" excitedly. "Of the Embassy at Hague? The name, sir?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand you"—haughtily.

"I am the only member of the Embassy at Hague who has just returned. My name is Sir Robert Tufton."

The other fell back a pace in amazement, and muttered: "Lord!"

"I am waiting, sir, for his name."

This aroused the other, and he said: "Yours is the name of my opponent, but you would make two of him. My name is Sir Thomas Hindford."

It was Sir Robert's turn to be staggered. He stood staring until he found strength enough to curse. This he did fluently, and added: "We have both been nicely fooled by a wretched little shrivelled rascal, and he has led us this dance as a piece of amusement to himself. Marry! he shall enjoy it if I ever catch hold of him."

Sir Thomas burst out laughing, and very soon they were on the friendliest terms, and all went to Sir Robert's rooms; there they thawed, had a hearty breakfast, and swore to keep an eye on their mutual friend.

Sir Robert and Sir Thomas found one another such kindred spirits that they arranged to spend that evening at Drury Lane together to see Rowe's "Fair Penitent."

They arrived at the theatre in good time, and during the play they both watched the lover of Calista very intently, and after this had continued some while, Sir Robert turned to his companion and said: "That man looks to me like my friend of yesterday."

"I was just thinking the same thing."

They both continued to watch very closely, and were soon positive of the man's identity.

Before the play was over they went out, and going round by the actors' exit inquired which was Shenwell's carriage. They were told, and after looking at it, left, went to Sir Thomas's rooms in Duke Street, and sat late into the night talking.

The following evening, after the performance at Drury Lane, William Shenwell got into his carriage, sank back into his cushions with a self-satisfied sigh, and drove off.

He had not gone very far when the carriage stopped with a jerk, and before he had time to inquire what was the cause, the door was flung open and two tall men entered. One sat by his side, the other opposite without a single word.

The actor recognised his latest victims, and his heart began to thump like a hard-worked pump.

The carriage started off directly the two men had entered, and he soon noticed it was going away from his house and soon reached the open country, still white with snow. He begged and implored them to forgive him. Neither of his self-imposed companions spoke until the carriage drew up at a little house away from all habitation.

Here he was bidden to alight, and, as he looked at his coachman to see if there might be any chance of help, he saw the man was a stranger. He groaned, went on with bent shoulders, looking smaller than ever. He was conducted into a room in which a cheerful fire was glowing, and supper was ready spread for three.

The actor was now in a terrible state of ill-suppressed excitement, and his whole body was twitching.

"Good evening, Sir Thomas," said one of his companions, when they had entered the room. "After we have refreshed ourselves and recovered from the cold journey, I shall give myself the





"TWO TALL MEN APPROACHED THEM."

pleasure of fulfilling the arrangements you made," tapping his sword and bowing.

The other immediately took up the refrain. "Good evening, to you, Sir Robert, if you kill my friend here, it will afford me the greatest pleasure to offer myself before you as the next candidate, so that you may not have to wait longer for an opportunity of wiping out the insult you complained of with my blood." He, too, bowed elaborately.

The poor little man's knees shook as he stood, and he began: "Dear sirs, I am only William Shenwell, actor; it was but a little joke on my part, a stupid joke. I pray you to forgive me, I know not how to fight."

"That is very charmingly acted, my dear sir, but you will admit that there is but a small element of a joke in waiting on a cold snowy morning at seven o'clock in Hyde Park. Really we must insist."

The actor sank into a chair, and bursting into tears begged again. "Forgive me, I pray you, I have a wife at home. For her sake forgive me. I apologise for all I said and did."

"We know you are a good actor, we saw you but yesterday. 'Sdeath! we had a little evidence of it even before, but now we are hungry and it grows late, and one, if not two of us, will require food and fire no more," tragically.

The little man fell on his knees, bowed his head to the ground, and between his sobs said: "Be merciful, be generous, I appeal to your clemency, by everything you hold precious, forgive me this once, I will do anything, apologise anywhere, only I cannot fight."

"Come, come, my good man, this isn't a rehearsal, nor even a little joke, we are men of our word and fight you must; but the feast first."

They fell to, and although they invited him to join them and pushed viands towards him, he would not touch anything, but sat wringing his hands, pray-

ing over and over again for mercy and calling piteously on his wife's name.

After they had finished their supper, they sat some while laughing and chatting, utterly ignoring the actor, who was all the while in a frenzy of terror.

When they were ready, they rapped on the floor, and another man came up. He cleared away, and moved the table and chairs into a corner so as to leave the room clear.

The terror on Shenwell's face as these operations were going on was enough to move a heart of stone. The first young man began to remove his coat, and as he did so said: "This man will act as your second, Mr. Shenwell, now pray prepare."

The man seemed to know his part. He went to the actor and by force—persuasion failed—got off his coat and waistcoat, put his sword in his hand, and stood him up in front of Sir Robert. He was shaking so terribly that the sword looked more like a conductor's baton. Twice he dropped it, only to have it picked up and put back into his hand. He stood so with his eyes shut and his face ghastly.

"Engage!" was called. Sir Robert made a few passes, twisted the sword out of the little man's hand, and lunged at his chest. With an awful shriek he fell backwards.

When he came to he was in bed; three men were anxiously looking at his face.

"Don't speak," one of them said, "nor attempt to move. We fetched a physician, and he has bound up your wound, and says there is a chance of your recovery if you are kept quite still."

He groaned, but did not move. He could feel the bandage right across his chest, and he felt very queer.

"Take this sleeping draught the doctor has sent," the man continued.

They raised his head very slowly and carefully, then poured it down.

The actor slept.



The cold grey light was streaming into the room when he awoke. He could see the snow steadily falling, and it was bitterly cold. The fire had gone out, and there was not much on the bed. No one was by him. The incidents of the night came back to him, and he

dering why they did not come. The time dragged on, but no one came near. The awful idea entered his head that they intended to leave him to die. He was feeling so parched with thirst that he ventured to raise his head very slowly. There was no water near, al-



"THE MAN, BY FORCE, STOOD THE ACTOR UP IN FRONT OF SIR ROBERT."

groaned. The bandage was still round him; he could feel the dull throbbing pain in his chest. He was thirsty—terribly thirsty, and frozen with cold. There was no one near to give him anything. For a long while he lay with chattering teeth, afraid to move, won-

though there was a bottle on the table. He fell back again with a moan, and listened for steps. His tongue felt as if it would crack.

No steps came, and there was no sound of anyone. At last he grew desperate. At all costs he determined

to get the water. He might as well die fetching it as deserted in bed.

Very slowly he lifted himself. The bandage was very tight. Cautiously he put his feet out and stood up. It was strange—he didn't feel very weak; he walked across the room slowly and carefully; very carefully, too, he raised the bottle and took a long pull at it. He felt all right after that, only dreadfully hungry and cold. He plucked up courage to have a look at the bandage to see if the blood had come through; he opened his shirt and started back.

Across his chest he saw three pieces of string tightly tied. There was no sign of a wound. He untied them, storming and raving in his best approved stage style. When he became cooler, he examined himself carefully. There was no trace of a wound—only three deep wales across his chest; he was whole. He capered about in his joy and his shirt. Having satisfied this feeling of joy—he was too hungry to bear much exertion—he determined to dress and get out of the hole as soon as he could.

He looked round for his clothes, but although he hunted in every possible corner, and afterwards all over the house, he could find no trace of them, nor any remains of the food. At last, numbed with cold, famished with hunger and utterly despondent, he went to the window and looked across the common. The snow was falling again, and lay some inches deep on the ground; no house in sight, nothing but the wild stretch of desolate common.

He stood there utterly depressed, without food, without fire, and clad in only

a shirt. As he still looked anxiously but hopelessly out he noticed a black patch in the distance, and by gazing intently he made it out to be a carriage, and it was standing still. In a moment he determined to make a bolt for it, so rapping a blanket around him, and without covering for his feet or head, he bolted for the carriage through the soft snow.

He intended to throw himself upon the mercy of the occupant; but what was his surprise to find when he got near that it was his own carriage and coachman.

In his great joy at the discovery he immediately shouted. The man with a cry of "Heavens!" as he saw that queer apparition appear, whipped up the horses and started to gallop away.

The agonised cry of "John! John!" made him stop, and looking again he recognised his master.

He returned, the actor got into the carriage, and ordered the perplexed coachman to drive home as hard as he could go.

He borrowed the coachman's wrap, but still felt the cold terribly, and swore to the cushions of the carriage, that if he did not die of exposure he would never play a practical joke again.

When they arrived at his house the coachman got down, and his master bade him knock and get the door opened; but while he was speaking it opened and the anxious face of his wife appeared.

He flung the door of the carriage open, rushed up the steps and shot past his wife, who stared after him.

So he reached home.



# THE O'RUDDY

By **STEPHEN CRANE** and **ROBERT BARR** \*

**SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.**—The O'Ruddy, acting on his father's dying instructions, sets out from Glendore to place certain papers in the hands of the Earl of Westport. Arrived at Bristol, he overhears a conversation in which his father is insulted, and a duel follows, the result being the wounding of his opponent, Colonel Royale, a friend of the Earl and of his son, Lord Strepp. On his return to the inn after the duel, The O'Ruddy discovers that his papers have been stolen, and at once suspects a Mr. Forister, whom he had kicked out of the door on the previous evening. He starts for Bath in pursuit, and on the road encounters Jem Bottles, a highwayman, to whom he administers a severe drubbing, and who agrees to assist him in his chase. Forister is caught by Paddy, the faithful, if somewhat wild, follower of The O'Ruddy, but it turns out that he is not the culprit, and O'Ruddy returns to Bristol. Next morning he is summoned to the bedroom of the Earl of Westport, who has arrived from London, and a stormy interview ensues, the Earl declaring that whatever papers The O'Ruddy has are worthless. O'Ruddy then accuses the Earl, in the presence of his daughter, the Lady Mary, of stealing the papers himself. In his anger, the Earl calls for his son. He enters with Colonel Royale, and while the former is demanding an explanation, the papers drop from under the Earl's pillow. O'Ruddy picks them up and hands them to Lady Mary Strepp, with whom he has already fallen in love. Next morning he fights a duel with Forister, whom he wounds. This excites the anger of the Countess of Westport, and she chases him out of the inn.

## XI.

**I** WASTED no time in the vicinity of the inn. I decided that an interval spent in some remote place would be consistent with the behaviour of a gentleman.

But the agitations of the day were not yet closed for me. Suddenly I came upon a small, slow-moving, and solemn company of men, who carried among them some kind of a pallet, and on this pallet was the body of Forister. I gazed upon his ghastly face; I saw the large blood blotches on his shirt; as they drew nearer I saw him roll his eyes and heard him groan. Some of the men recognised me, and I saw black looks and straight-pointing fingers. At the rear walked Lord Strepp with Forister's sword under his arm. I turned away with a new impression of the pastime of duelling.

I spent most of the day down among the low taverns of the sailors, striving to interest myself in a thousand new sights brought by the ships from foreign parts.

But ever my mind returned to Lady Mary, and to my misfortune in being

pursued around chairs and tables by my angel's mother. I had also managed to have a bitter quarrel with the noble father of this lovely creature. It was hardly possible that I could be joyous over my prospects.

At noon I returned to the inn, approaching with some display of caution. As I neared it, a carriage followed by some horsemen whirled speedily from the door. I knew at once that Lady Mary had been taken from me. She was gone with her father and mother back to London. I recognised Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale among the horsemen.

I walked through the inn to the garden, and looked at the parrot. My senses were all numb. I stared at the bird as it rolled its wicked eye at me.

"Pretty lady! Pretty lady!" it called in coarse mockery.

"Plague the bird!" I muttered, as I turned upon my heel and entered the inn.

"My bill," said I. "A horse for Bath!"

Again I rode forth on a quest. The first had been after my papers. The second was after my love. The second

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was the hopeless one, and, overcome by melancholy, I did not even spur my horse swiftly on my mission. There was upon me the deep-rooted sadness which balances the mirth of my people—the Celtic aptitude for discouragement; and even the keening of old women in the red glow of the peat fire could never have deepened my mood.

And if I should succeed in reaching London, what then? Would the wild savage from the rocky shore of Ireland be a pleasing sight to my Lady Mary when once more amid the glamour and whirl of the fashionable town? Besides, I could no longer travel on the guineas of Jem Bottles. He had engaged himself and his purse in my service because I had told him of a fortune involved in the regaining of certain papers. I had regained those papers, and then coolly placed them as a gift in a certain lovely white hand. I had had no more thought of Jem Bottles and his five guineas than if I had never seen them. But this was no excuse for a gentleman. When I was arrived at the rendezvous I must immediately confess to Jem Bottles, the highwayman, that I had wronged him. I did not expect him to demand satisfaction, but I thought he might shoot me in the back as I was riding away.

But Jem was not at the appointed place under the tree. Not puzzled at this behaviour, I rode on. I saw I could not expect the man to stay for ever under a tree while I was away in Bristol fighting a duel and making eyes at a lady. Still, I had heard that it was always done.

At the inn where Paddy holed Forister I did not dismount, although an ostler ran out busily. "No," said I, "I ride on." I looked at the man. Small, sharp-eyed, weazened, he was as likely a rascal of an ostler as ever helped a highwayman to know a filled purse from a man who was riding to make arrangements with his creditors.

"Do you remember me?" said I.

"No, sir," he said with great promptitude.

"Very good," said I. "I knew you did. Now I want to know if Master Jem Bottles has passed this way to-day. A shilling for the truth and a thrashing for a lie."

The man came close to my stirrup. "Master," he said, "I know you to be a friend of him. Well, in daytime he don't ride past our door. There be lanes. And so he ain't passed here, and that's the truth."

I flung him a shilling. "Now," I said, "what of the red giant?"

The man opened his little eyes in surprise. "He took horse with you gentlemen and rode on to Bristol, or I don't know."

"Very good; now I see two very fine horses champing in the yard. And who owns them?"

If I had expected to catch him in treachery I was wrong.

"Them?" said he, jerking his thumb. He still kept his voice lowered. "They belong to two gentlemen who rode out some hours ago along with some great man's carriage. The officer said some pin-pricks he had gotten in a duel had stiffened him, and made the saddle ill of ease with him, and the young lord said he would stay behind as a companion. They be up in the Colonel's chamber, drinking vastly. But mind your life, sir, if you would halt them on the road. They be men of great spirit. This inn seldom sees such drinkers."

And so Lord Strepp and Colonel Royale were resting at this inn while the carriage of the Earl had gone on toward Bath. I had a mind to dismount and join the two in their roystering, but my eyes turned wistfully toward Bath.

As I rode away I began to wonder what had become of Jem Bottles and Paddy. Here was a fine pair to be abroad in the land. Here were two jewels to be rampaging across the country. Separately, they were villains



enough, but together they would overturn England and get themselves hanged for it on twin gibbets. I tried to imagine the particular roguery to which they would first give their attention.

But then all thought of the rascals faded from me as my mind received a vision of Lady Mary's fair face, her figure, her foot. It would not be me to be thinking of two such thieves when I could be dreaming of Lady Mary with her soft voice and the clear depth of her eyes. My horse seemed to have a sympathy with



"MY HORSE SUDDENLY PITCHED FORWARD ON TO HIS KNEES AND NOSE."

my feeling, and he leaped bravely along the road. The Celtic melancholy of the first part of the journey had blown away like a sea-mist. I sped on gallantly toward Bath and Lady Mary.

But almost at the end of the day, when I was within a few miles of Bath, my horse suddenly pitched forward on to his knees and nose. There was a flying spray of muddy water. I was flung out of the saddle, but I fell without any serious hurt whatever. We had been ambushed by some kind of deep-sided puddle. My poor horse scrambled out and stood with lowered head, heaving and trembling. His soft nose had been cut between his teeth and the far

edge of the puddle. I led him forward, watching his legs. He was lamed. I looked in wrath and despair back at the puddle, which was as plain as a golden guinea on a platter. I do not see how I could have blundered into it, for the daylight was still clear and strong. I had been gazing like a fool in the direction of Bath. And my Celtic melancholy swept down upon me again, and even my father's bier appeared before me with the pale candle-flames swaying in the gusty room, and now indeed my ears heard the loud wailing keen of the old women.

"Rubbish," said I suddenly and aloud, "and is it one of the best swordsmen in

England that is to be beaten by a lame horse?" My spirit revived. I resolved to leave my horse in the care of the people of the nearest house, and proceed at once on foot to Bath. The people of the inn could be sent out after the poor animal. Wheeling my eyes, I saw a house not more than two fields away, with honest hospitable smoke curling from the chimneys. I led my beast through a hole in the hedge, and I slowly made my way toward it.

Now it happened that my way led me near a haycock, and as I neared this haycock I heard voices from the other side of it. I hastened forward, thinking to find some yokels. But as I drew very close I suddenly halted and silently listened to the voices on the other side.

"Sure, I can read," Paddy was saying. "And why wouldn't I be able? If we couldn't read in Ireland, we would be after being cheated in our rents, but we never pay them anyhow, so that's no matter. I would be having you to know we are a highly educated people. And perhaps you would be reading it yourself, my man?"

"No," said Jem Bottles, "I be not a great scholar and it has a look of amazing hardness. And I misdoubt me," he added in a morose and envious voice, "that your head be too full of learning."

"Learning!" cried Paddy. "Why wouldn't I be learned, since my uncle was a sexton and had to know one grave from another by looking at the stones so as never to mix up the people? Learning! says you? And wasn't there a convent at Ballygowagglycuddi, and wasn't Ballygowagglycuddi only ten miles from my father's house, and haven't I seen it many a time?"

"Aye, well, good Master Paddy," replied Jem Bottles, oppressed and sullen, but still in a voice ironic from suspicion, "I never doubt me but what you are a regular clerk for deep learning, but you have not yet read a line from the paper, and I have been waiting this half-hour."

"And how could I be reading?" cried Paddy in tones of indignation. "How could I be reading with you there croaking of this and that and speaking hard of my learning? Bad cess to the paper, I will be after reading it to myself if you are never to stop your clatter, Jem Bottles."

"I be still as a dead rat," exclaimed the astonished highwayman.

"Well, then," said Paddy, "listen hard, and you will hear such learning as would be making your eyes jump from your head."

"I be a-waiting," said Jem Bottles.

"Well, then," said Paddy, pained at these interruptions, "listen well, and maybe you will gain some learning which may serve you all your life in reading chalk-marks in taprooms; for I see that they have that custom in this country, and 'tis very bad for hard-drinking men who have no learning."

"If you would read from the paper —" began Jem Bottles.

"Now, will you be still?" cried Paddy in vast exasperation.

But here Jem Bottles spoke with angry resolution. "Come, now! Read! 'Tis not me that talks too much, and the day wanes."

"Well, well, I would not be hurried, and that's the truth," said Paddy, soothingly. "Listen now." I heard a rustling of paper. "Ahem!" said Paddy, "ahem! Are ye listening, Jem Bottles?"

"I be," replied the highwayman.

"Then here's for it," said Paddy in a formidable voice. There was another rustling of paper. Then to my surprise I heard Paddy intone, without punctuation, in the following words:—

"Dear Sister Mary I am asking the good father to write this because my hand is lame from milking the cows although we only have one and we sold her in the autumn the four shillings you owe on the pig we would like if convenient to pay now owing to the landlord may the plague take him how did your Mickey find the fishing when you see Peggy tell her—"

Here Jem Bottles's voice arose in tones of incredulity.



"And these be the papers of the great Earl!" he cried.

Then the truth flashed across my vision like the lightning. My two madraen had robbed the carriage of the Earl of Westport, and had taken, among other things, the Earl's papers—my papers—Lady Mary's papers. I strode around the haycock.

"Wretches!" I shouted. "Miserable wretches!"

For a time they were speechless. Paddy found his tongue first.

"Aye, 'tis him! 'Tis nothing but little black men and papers with him, and when we get them for him he calls us out of our names in a foreign tongue. 'Tis no service for a bright man," he concluded mournfully.

"Give me the papers," said I.

Paddy obediently handed them. I knew them. They were my papers—Lady Mary's papers.

"And now," said I, eyeing the pair, "what mischief have you two been compassing?"

Paddy only mumbled sulkily. It was something on the difficulties of satisfying me on the subjects of little black men and papers. Jem Bottles was also sulky, but he grumbled out the beginning of an explanation.

"Well, master, I bided under a tree till him here came, and then we together bided. And at last we thought, with the time so heavy, we might better work to handle a purse or two—thinking," he said, delicately, "our gentleman might have need of a little gold. Well, and as we were riding, a good lad from the—your worship knows where—tells us the Earl's carriage is halting there for a time, but will go on later without its escort of two gentlemen; only with servants. And, thinking to do our gentleman a good deed, I brought them to stand on the highway, and then he——"

"And then I," broke in Paddy, proudly, "walks up to the carriage door, looking like a king's cruiser, and says

I, 'Pray excuse the manners of a self-opinionated man, but I consider your purses would look better in my pocket.' And then there was a great trouble. An old owl of a woman screeched, and was for killing me with a bottle which she had been holding against her nose. But she never dared. And with that an old sick man lifted himself from hundreds of cushions, and says he: 'What do you want? You can't have them,' says he, and he keeps clasping his breast. 'First of all,' says I, 'I want what you have there. What I want else I'll tell you at my leisure.' And he was all for mouthing and fuming; but he was that scared, he gave me those papers—bad luck to them." Paddy cast an evil eye upon the papers in my hand.

"And then?" said I.

"The driver he tried for to whip up," interpolated Jem Bottles. "He was a game one, but the others were like wet cats."

"And says I," continued Paddy, "'now we will have the gold, if it please you.' And out it came. 'I bid ye a good journey,' says I; and I thought it was over, and how easy it was highwaying, and I liked it well, until the lady on the front seat opens her hood and shows me a prettier face than we have in all Ireland. She clasps two white hands. 'Oh, please, Mr. Highwayman, my father's papers——' And with that I backs away. 'Let them go,' says I to Jem Bottles, and sick I was of it. The poor lady!"

I was no longer angry with Paddy.

"Aye," said Jem Bottles, "the poor lady was that forlorn!"

I was no longer angry with Jem Bottles.

But I now had to do a deal of thinking. It was plain that the papers were of supreme importance to the Earl. Although I had given them to Lady Mary, they had returned to me. It was fate. My father had taught me to respect those papers, but I now saw them as a sign in the sky.

However, it was hard to decide what to do. I had given the papers to Lady Mary, and they had fled back to me swifter than cormorants. Perhaps it was willed that I should keep them. And then there would be tears in the eyes of Lady Mary, who suffered through the suffering of her father. No ; come good, come bad for me, for Jem Bottles, for Paddy, I would stake our fortunes on the act of returning the papers to Lady Mary.

It is the way of Irishmen. We are all of us true philanthropists. That is why we have nothing, although in other countries I have seen philanthropists who had a great deal. My own interest in the papers I staked, mentally, with a glad mind ; the minor interests of Jem Bottles and Paddy I staked, mentally, without thinking of them at all. But surely it would be a tribute to fate to give anything to Lady Mary.

I resolved on a course of action. When I aroused to look at my companions, I found them seated face to face on the ground, like players of draughts. Between them was spread a handkerchief, and on that handkerchief was a heap of guineas. Jem Bottles was saying : "Here be my fingers five times over again." He separated a smaller heap. "Here be my fingers five times over again." He separated another little stack. "And here be my fingers five times over again and two more yet. Now can ye understand?"

"Bedad!" said Paddy, admiringly, "you have the learning this time, Master Bottles. My uncle the sexton could not have done it better."

"What is all this?" said I.

They both looked at me deprecatingly. "'Tis, your honour," began Paddy, "'tis only some little small sum—nothing to be talked of—belonging to the old sick man in the carriage."

"Paddy and Jem Bottles," said I, "I forgive you the taking of the papers. Ye are good men and true. Now we will do great deeds."

## XII.

My plans were formed quickly. "We now have a treasure chest of no small dimensions," said I, very complacent, naturally. "We can conquer London with this. Everything is before us. I have already established myself as the grandest swordsman in the whole continent of England. Lately we have gained much treasure. And also I have the papers. Paddy, do you take care of this poor horse. Then follow me into Bath. Jem Bottles, do you mount and ride around the town, for I fear your balladists. Meet me on the London road. Ride slowly on the highway to London, and in due time I will overtake you. I shall pocket a few of those guineas, but you yourself shall be the main treasury. Hold! what of Paddy's hair? Did he rob the Earl with that great flame showing? He dare not appear in Bath."

"'Tis small tribute to my wit, sir," answered Jem Bottles. "I would as soon go poaching in company with a lighthouse as to call a stand on the road with him uncovered. I tied him in cloth until he looked no more like himself than he now does look like a parson."

"Aye," said Paddy, in some bad humour, "my head was tied in a bag. My mother would not have known me from a pig going to market. And I would not be for liking it every day. My hair is what the blessed Saints sent me, and I see no such fine hair around me that people are free to throw the laugh at me."

"Peace!" said I.

Their horses were tied to an adjacent thicket. I sent Paddy off with my lame mount, giving him full instructions as to his lies. I and Jem Bottles took the other horses and rode toward Bath.

Where a certain lane turned off from the highway I parted with Jem Bottles, and he rode away between the hedges. I cantered into Bath.

The best-known inn was ablaze with





"MY TWO MADMEN HAD ROBBED THE CARRIAGE OF THE EARL OF WESTPORT."

fleeting lights, and people were shouting within. It was some time before I could gain a man to look after my horse. Of him I demanded the reason of the disturbance. "The Earl of Westport's carriage has been robbed on the Bristol road, sir," he cried excitedly. "There be parties starting out. I pray they catch him."

"And who would they be catching, my lad?" said I.

"Jem Bottles, sir," answered the man. "But 'tis a fierce time they will have, for he stands no less than eight feet in his boots, and his eyes are no human eyes, but burn blood-red always. His hands are adrip with blood, and he surely is a devil, sir."

"From the description I would be willing to believe it," said I. "However, he will be easy to mark. Such a monster can hardly be mistaken for an honest man."

I entered the inn, while a boy staggered under my valises. I had difficulty in finding the landlord. But in the corridor were a number of travellers, and evidently one had come that day from Bristol, for he suddenly nudged another and hurriedly whispered:—

"'Tis him! The great Irish swordsman!"

Then the news spread like the wind, apparently, that the man who had beaten the great Forister was arrived in good health at the inn. There were murmurs, and a great deal of attention, and many eyes. I suddenly caught myself swaggering somewhat. It is hard to be a famous person and not show a great swollen chicken-breast to the people. They are disappointed if you do not strut and step high. "Show me to a chamber," said I, splendidly. The servants bowed their foreheads to the floor.

But the great hubbub over the Earl's loss continued without abatement. Gentlemen clanked down in their spurs; there was much talk of dragoons; the

tumult was extraordinary. Upstairs the landlord led me past the door of a kind of drawing-room. I glanced within, and saw the Earl of Westport gesturing and declaiming to a company of gentlemen. He was propped up in a great armchair.

"And why would he be waving his hands that way?" said I to two servants who stood without.

"His lordship has lost many valuable papers at the hands of a miscreant, sir," answered one.

"Is it so?" said I. "Well, then, I would see his lordship."

But here this valet stiffened.

"No doubt but what his lordship would be happy to see you, sir," he answered slowly. "Unfortunately, however, he has forbidden me to present strangers to his presence."

"I have very important news. Do not be an idiot," said I. "Announce me—The O'Ruddy."

"The O'Ruggy?" said he.

"The O'Ruddy," said I.

"The O'Rudgy?" said he.

"No," said I, and I told him again. Finally he took two paces within the room and sung out in a loud voice:—

"The O'Rubby."

I heard the voice of the sick old Earl calling out from his great chair: "Why, 'tis the Irishman! Bid him enter. I am glad—I am always very glad—ahem!—"

As I strode into the room, I was aware of another buzz of talk. Apparently, here, too, were plenty of people who knew me as the famous swordsman. The Earl moved his jaw and mumbled.

"Aye," said he, at last, "here is The O'Ruddy. And, do you know, Mr. O'Ruddy, I have been foully robbed, and, among other things, have lost your worthless papers?"

"I heard that you had lost them," I answered composedly. "But I refuse to take your word that they are worthless."

Many people stared, and the Earl



gave me a firm scowl. But, after consideration, he spoke as if he thought it well to dissemble a great dislike of me. The many candles burned very brightly, and we could all see each other. I thought it better to back casually toward the wall.

"You never accomplish anything," coughed the sick Earl; "yet you are for ever prating of yourself. I wish my son were here. My papers are gone; I shall never recover them."

"The papers are in the breast of my coat at this moment," said I coolly.

There was a great tumult. The Earl lost his head, and cried:—

"Seize him!" Two or three young men took steps toward me. I was back to the wall, and in a leisurely and contemptuous way I drew my sword.

"The first gentleman who advances is a dead man," said I pleasantly.

Some drew away quickly; some hesitated, and then withdrew subtly. In the meantime the screeches of the Earl mocked them all.

"Aye, the wild Irishman brings you up to a stand, he does! Now who will have at him? In all Bath have I no friend with a stout heart?"

After looking them over, I said:—

"No, my lord, you have none."

At this insult the aged peer arose from his chair. "Bring me my sword," he cried to his valet. A hush fell upon us all. We were rendered immovable by the solemn dignity of this proceeding.

It was some time before I could find my tongue.

"And if you design to cross blades with me, you will find me a sad renegade," said I. "I am holding the papers for the hands of their true owner."

"And their true owner?" he demanded.

"Lady Mary Strepp," said I.

He sank back into his seat. "This Irishman's impudence is beyond measuring," he exclaimed. The hurrying valet arrived at that moment with a sword.

"Take it away! Take it away!" he cried. "Do I wish valets to be handing swords to me at any time of the day or night?"

Here a belligerent red-faced man disengaged himself abruptly from the group of gentleman and addressed the Earl. "Westport," said he flatly, "I can ill bear your taunt concerning your Bath friends, and this is not to speak of the insolence of the person yonder."

"Oh, ho!" said I. "Well, and the person yonder remains serene in his insolence."

The Earl, smiling slightly, regarded the new speaker.

"Sir Edmund Flixton was ever a dainty swordsman, picking and choosing like a lady in a flower-bed. Perchance he is anxious to fight the gentleman who has just given Reginald Forister something he will not forget?"

At this Flixton actually turned pale and drew back. Evidently he had not yet heard the news. And, mind you, I could see that he would fight me the next moment. He would come up and be killed like a gentleman. But the name of a great conqueror had simply appalled him and smitten him back.

The Earl was gazing at me with an entirely new expression. He had cleverly eliminated all dislike from his eyes. He covered me with a friendly regard.

"O'Ruddy," he said softly, "I would have some private speech with you. Come into my chamber."

The Earl leaned on the shoulder of his valet and a little fat doctor, and walked painfully into another room. I followed, knowing that I was now to withstand a subtle, wheedling, gentle attempt to gain the papers without the name of Lady Mary being mentioned.

The Earl was slowly lowered into a great chair. After a gasp of relief he devoted a brightening attention to me. "You are not a bad fellow, O'Ruddy," he observed. "You remind me greatly of your father. Aye, he was a rare dog, a rare dog!"

"I've heard him say so, many is the day, sir," I answered.

"Aye, a rare dog!" chuckled the old man. "I have in my memory some brisk pictures of your father with his ready tongue, his what-the-devil-does-it-matter-sir, and that extraordinary swordmanship which you seem to have inherited."

"My father told me you were great friends in France," I answered civilly; "but from some words you let drop in Bristol I judged that he was mistaken."

"Tut," said the Earl. "You are not out of temper with me, are you, O'Ruddy?"

"With me happily in possession of the papers," I rejoined, "I am in good temper with everybody. 'Tis not for me to lose my good nature when I hold all the cards."

The Earl's mouth quickly dropped to a sour expression, but almost as quickly he put on a pleasant smile. "Aye," he said, nodding his sick head. "Always jovial, always jovial. Precisely like his father. In fact it brings back an old affection."

"If the old affection had been brought back a little earlier, sir," said I, "we all would have had less bother. 'Twas you who in the beginning drew a long face and set a square chin over the business. I am now in the mood to be rather airy."

Our glances blazed across each other. "But," said the Earl, in the gentlest of voices, "you have my papers, O'Ruddy, papers entrusted to you by your dying father to give into the hands of his old comrade. Would you betray such a sacred trust? Could you wanton yourself to the base practices of mere thievery?"

"'Tis not I who has betrayed any trust," I cried boldly. "I brought the papers and wished to offer them. They arrived in your possession, and you cried 'Straw, straw!' Did you not?"

"'Twas an expedient, O'Ruddy," said the Earl.

"There is more than one expedient in the world," said I. "I am now using the expedient of keeping the papers."

And in the glance which he gave me I saw that I had been admitted behind a certain barrier. He was angry, but he would never more attempt to overbear me with grand threats. And he would never more attempt to undermine me with cheap flattery. We had measured one against the other, and he had not come away thinking out of his proportion. After a time he said:—

"What do you propose to do, Mr. O'Ruddy?"

I could not help but grin at him. "I propose nothing," said I. "I am not a man for meaning two things when I say one."

"You've said one thing, I suppose?" he said slowly.

"I have," said I.

"And the one thing?" said he.

"Your memory is as good as mine," said I.

He mused deeply and at great length. "You have the papers?" he asked finally.

"I still have them," said I.

"Then," he cried with sudden vehemence, "why didn't you read the papers and find out the truth?"

I almost ran away.

"Your—your lordship," I stammered, "I thought perhaps in London—in London perhaps—I might get a—I would try to get a tutor."

### XIII.

"So that is the way of it, is it?" said the Earl, grinning. "And why did you not take it to some clerk?"

"My lord," said I, with dignity, "the papers were with me in trust for you. A man may be a gentleman, and yet not know how to read and write."

"'Tis quite true," answered he.

"And when I spoke of the tutor in London, I did not mean to say that I would use what knowledge he imparted to read your papers. I was merely





"THE FIRST GENTLEMAN WHO ADVANCES IS A DEAD MAN," SAID I PLEASANTLY."

blushing for the defects in my education, although Father Donovan often said that I knew half as much as he did, poor man, and him a holy father. If you care to so direct me, I can go even now to my chamber and make shift to read the papers."

"The Irish possess a keen sense of honour," said he, admiringly.

"We do," said I. "We possess more integrity and perfect sense of honour than any other people in the world, although they all say the same of themselves, and it was my own father who often said that he would trust an Irishman as far as he could see him and no more, but for a foreigner he had only the length of an eyelash."

"And what do you intend with the papers now, O'Ruddy?" said he.

"I intend as I intended," I replied. "There is no change in me."

"And your intentions?" said he.

"To give them into the hands of Lady Mary Strepp, and no other," said I boldly.

I looked at him. He looked at me.

"Lady Mary Strepp, my daughter," he said in ironic musing. "Would not her mother do, O'Ruddy?" he asked softly.

I gave a start.

"She is not near?" I demanded, looking from here to there.

He laughed.

"Aye, she is. I can have her here to take the papers in one short moment."

I held up my hands.

"No—no——"

"Peace!" said he, with a satanic chuckle. "I was only testing your courage."

"My lord," said I gravely, "seeing a bare blade come at your breast is one thing, and running round a table is another; and besides, you have no suitable table in this chamber.

The old villain laughed again.

"O'Ruddy," he cried, "I would be a well man if you were always near me.

Shall I have a table fetched up from below? 'Twould be easy."

Here I stiffened.

"My lord, this is frivolity," I declared. "I came here to give the papers. If you do not care to take them in the only way in which I will give them, let us have it said quickly."

"They seem to be safe in your hands at present," he remarked. "Of course, after you go to London and get a tutor—ahem——"

"I will be starting at once," said I, "although Father Donovan always told me that he was a good tutor as tutors went at the time in Ireland. And I want to be saying now, my lord, that I cannot understand you. At one moment you are crying one thing of the papers; at the next moment you are crying another. At this time you are having a laugh with me over them. What do you mean? I'll not stand this shiver-shivering any longer, I'll have you to know. What do you mean?"

He raised himself among his cushions and fixed me with a bony finger.

"What do I mean? I'll tell you, O'Ruddy," said he, while his eyes shone brightly. "I mean that I can be contemptuous of your plot. You will not show those papers to any breathing creature, because you are in love with my daughter. Fool! to match your lies against an ex-minister of the King."

My eyes must have almost dropped from my head; but, as soon as I recovered from my dumfounderment, I grew amazed at the great intellect of this man. I had told nobody, and yet he knew all about it. Yes, I was in love with Lady Mary, and he was as well informed of it as if he had had spies to watch my dreams. And I saw that in many cases a lover was a kind of an ostrich—the bird which buries its head in the sands and thinks it is secure from detection. I wished that my father had told me more about love, for I have no doubt he knew everything of it; he had lived so many years in France.



Father Donovan, of course, could not have helped me in such instruction. I resolved, anyhow, to be more cautious in the future, although I did not exactly see how I could improve myself. The Earl's insight was pure mystery to me. I would not be for saying that he practised black magic, but anyhow, if he had been at Glandore, I would have had him chased through three parishes.

However, the Earl was grinning victoriously, and I saw that I must harden my face to a brave exterior.

"And is it so?" said I. "Is it so?"

"Yes," he said, with his grin.

"And what then?" said I bluntly.

In his enjoyment he had been back again among his cushions.

"What then? What then?" he snarled, rearing up swiftly. "Why, then, you are an insolent fool! Begone from me! Begone! Be——"

Here some spasm overtook him—a spasm more from rage than from the sickness. He fell back breathless, although his eyes continued to burn at me.

"My lord," said I, bowing, "I will go no poorer than when I came, save that I have lost part of the respect that I once had for you."

I turned and left his chamber. Some few gentlemen yet remained in the drawing-room as I passed out into the public part of the inn. I went quietly to a chamber and sat down to think. I was for ever going to chambers and sitting down to think after these talks with the Earl, during which he was for ever rearing up in his chair and then falling back among the cushions.

But here was another tumble over the cliffs, if you like! Here was genuine disaster! I laid my head in my hands and mused before my lonely fire, drinking much and visioning my ruin. What the Earl said was true. There was trouble in the papers for the old nobleman. That he knew. That I knew. And he knew with his devilish wisdom that I would lose my head rather than

see her in sorrow. Well, I could bide a time. I would go to London in company with Paddy and Jem Bottles, since they owned all the money, and if three such rogues could not devise something, then I would go away and bury myself in a war in foreign parts, occupying myself in scaling fortresses and capturing guns. These things I know I could have performed magnificently, but from the Earl I had learned that I was an ill man to conduct an affair of the heart.

I do not know how long I meditated, but suddenly there was a great tumult on the stairs near my door. There were the shouts and heavy breathings of men struggling, and over all rang a screech as from some wild bird. I ran to the door and poked my head discreetly out; for my coat and waistcoat were off as well as my sword, and I wished to see the manner of tumult at a distance before I saw it close. As I thrust forth my head I heard a familiar voice:—

"And if ye come closer, ye old wild-cat, 'tis me will be forgetting respect to my four great-grandmothers and braining you. Keep off! Am I not giving ye the word? Keep off!"

Then another familiar voice answered him in a high fury. "And you, gallows-bird, you gallows-bird, you gallows-bird! You answer me, do you? They're coming, all, even to the hangman! You'll soon know how to dance without a fiddler! Ah, would you? Would you?"

If I had been afflicted with that strange malady of the body which sometimes causes men to fall to the ground and die in a moment without a word, my doom would have been sealed. It was Paddy and Hoity-Toity engaged in animated discussion.

"And if ye don't mind your eye, ye old cormorant——" began Paddy.

"And you would be a highwayman, would you, gallows-bird——" began the Countess.

"Cow——" began Paddy.

Here for many reasons I thought it

time to interfere. "Paddy!" I cried. He gave a glance at my door, recognised my face, and, turning quickly, ran through into my chamber. I barred the door even as Hoity-Toity's fist thundered on the oak.

"It's a she-wolf," gasped Paddy, his chest pressing in and out.

"And what did you do to her?" I demanded.

"Nothing but try to run away, sure," said Paddy.

"And why would she be scratching you?"

"She saw me for one of the highway-men robbing the coach, and there was I, not knowing what to do, and all the people of the inn trying to put peace upon her, and me dodging, and then——"

"Man," said I, grabbing his arm, "'tis a game that ends on the——"

"Never a bit," he interrupted composedly. "Wasn't the old witch drunk, claws and all, and didn't even the great English lord, or whatever, send his servant to bring her in, and didn't he, the big man, stand in the door and spit on the floor and go in when he saw she was for battering all the servants and using worse talk than the sailors I heard in Bristol? It would not be me they were after, those men running. It would be her. And small power to them, but they were no good at it. I am for taking a stool in my hand——"

"Whist!" said I. "In England they would not be hitting great ladies with stools. Let us hearken to the brawl. She is fighting them finely."

For I had seen that Paddy spoke truth. The noble lady was engaged in battling with servants who had been in pursuit of her when she was in pursuit of Paddy. Never had I seen even my own father so drunk as she was then. But the heart-rending thing was the humble protests of the servants. "Your ladyship! Oh, *your* ladyship!"—as they came up one by one, or two by two, obeying orders of the Earl, to

be incontinently boxed on the ears by a member of a profligate aristocracy. Probably any one of them was strong enough to throw the beldame out at a window. But such was not the manner of the time. One would think they would retreat upon the Earl and ask to be dismissed from his service. But this also was not the manner of the time. No; they marched up heroically and took their cuffs on the head and cried: "Oh, your ladyship! Please, your ladyship!" They were only pretenders in their attacks; all they could do was to wait until she was tired, and then humbly escort her to where she belonged, meanwhile pulling gently at her arms.

"She was after recognising you, then?" said I to Paddy.

"Indeed, and she was," said he. He had dropped into a chair, and was looking as if he needed a doctor to cure him of exhaustion. "She would be after having eyes like a sea-gull. And Jem Bottles was all for declaring that my disguise was complete, bad luck to the little man!"

"Your disguise complete?" said I. "You couldn't disguise yourself unless you stood your head in a barrel. What talk is this?"

"Sure an' I looked no more like myself than I looked like a wild man with eight rows of teeth in his head," said Paddy, mournfully. "My own mother would have been after taking me for a horse. 'Tis that old creature with her evil eye who would be seeing me when all the others were blind as bats. I could have walked down the big street in Cork without a man knowing me."

"That you could at any time," said I. The Countess had for some moments ceased to hammer on my door. "Hearken! I think they are managing her."

Either Hoity-Toity had lost heart, or the servants had gained some courage, for we heard them dragging





PADDY PINIONS THE COUNTESS.

her delicately down the staircase. Presently there was a silence.

After I had waited until this silence grew into the higher silence which seems like perfect safety, I rang the bell and ordered food and drink. Paddy had a

royal meal, sitting on the floor by the fireplace and holding a platter on his knee. From time to time I tossed him something for which I did not care. He was very grateful for my generosity. He ate in a barbaric fashion, crunching

bones of fowls between his great white teeth and swallowing everything.

I had a mind to discourse upon manners in order that Paddy might not shame me when we came to London ; for a gentleman is known by the ways of his servants. If people of quality should see me attended by such a savage they would put me down small. "Paddy," said I, "mend your ways of eating."

"My ways of eating, your honour?" said he. "And am I not eating all that I can hold? I was known to be a good man at platter always. Sure, I've seen no man in England eat more than me. But thank you kindly, sir."

"You misunderstand me," said I. "I wish to improve your manner of eating. It would not be fine enough for the sight of great people. You eat, without taking breath, pieces as big as a block of turf."

"'Tis the custom in my part of Ireland," answered Paddy.

"I understand," said I. "But over here 'tis only very low people who fall upon their meat from a window above."

"I am not in the way of understanding your honour," said he. "But, anyhow, a man may be respectable, and yet have a good hunger on him."

#### XIV.

It had been said that the unexpected often happens, although I do not know what learned man of the time succeeded in thus succinctly expressing a great law ; and, anyhow, it matters little, for I have since discovered that these learned men make one headful of brains go a long way by dint of poaching on each other's knowledge. But the unexpected happened in this case, all true enough whatever.

I was giving my man a bit of a warning.

"Paddy," said I, "you are big, and you are red, and you are Irish ; but, by the same token, you are not the great Fingal, son of lightning. I would

strongly give you the word. When you see that old woman, you start for the open moors."

"Never fear me, sir," answered Paddy, promptly. "I'll not be stopping. I would be swimming to Ireland before she lays a claw on me."

"And mind you exchange no words with her," said I, "for 'tis that which seems to work most wrongfully upon her."

"Not a word out of me," said he ; "I'll be that busy getting up the road."

There was another tumult in the corridor, with the same screeches by one and the same humble protests by a multitude. The disturbance neared us with surprising speed. Suddenly I recalled that, when the servant had retired, after bringing food and drink, I had neglected to again bar the door. I rushed for it, but I was all too late. I saw the latch rise. "Paddy!" I shouted wildly, "mind yourself!" And with that I dropped to the floor and slid under the bed.

Paddy howled, and I lifted a corner of the valance to see what was transpiring. The door had been opened, and the Countess stood looking into the room. She was no longer in a fiery rage ; she was cool, deadly determined, her glittering eye fixed on Paddy. She took a step forward.

Paddy, in his anguish, chanted to himself an Irish wail, in which he described his unhappiness. "Oh, mother of me, and here I am caught again by the old wild-cat! And sure, the way she creeps toward me is enough to put the fear of God in the heart of a hedge-robber. And it was me was living so fine and grand in England, and greatly pleased with myself. Sorrow the day I left Ireland ; it is, indeed !"

She was now close to him, and she seemed to be preparing for one stupendous pounce which would mean annihilation to Paddy. Her lean hands were thrust out, with the fingers crooked, and it seemed to me that her fingers



were very long. In despair, Paddy changed his tune and addressed her.

"Ah! now, alanna, sure the kind lady would be for doing no harm? Be easy, now, acushla."

But these tender appeals had no effect. Suddenly she pounced. Paddy roared, and sprang backward with splendid agility. He seized a chair.

Now, I am quite sure that before he came to England Paddy had never seen a chair, although it is true that at some time in his life he may have had a peep through a window into an Irish gentleman's house, where there might be a chair if the king's officers in the neighbourhood were not very ambitious and powerful. But Paddy handled this chair as if he had seen many of them. He grasped it by the back and thrust it out, aiming all four legs at the Countess. It was a fine move. I have seen a moderately good swordsman fairly put to it by a pack of scoundrelly drawers who assailed him at all points in this manner.

"An' you come on too fast," quavered Paddy, "ye can grab two legs, but there will be one left for your eye and another for your brisket."

However, she came on, sure enough, and there was a moment of scuffling near the end of the bed out of my sight. I wriggled down to gain another view, and when I cautiously lifted an edge of the valance, my eyes met the strangest sight ever seen in all England. Paddy, much dishevelled and panting like a hunt-dog, had wedged the Countess against the wall. She was pinioned by the four legs of the chair, and Paddy, by dint of sturdily pushing at the chair-back, was keeping her in a fixed position.

In a flash my mind was made up. Here was the time to escape. I scrambled quickly from under the bed.

"Bravo, Paddy!" I cried, dashing about the room after my sword, coat, waistcoat, and hat. "Devil a fear but you'll hold her, my bucko! Push hard,

my brave lad, and mind your feet don't slip!"

"If your honour pleases," said Paddy, without turning his eyes from his conquest, "'tis a little help I would be wishing here. She would be as strong in the shoulder as a good plough-horse, and I am not for staying here for ever."

"Bravo, my grand lad!" I cried, at last finding my hat, which had somehow gotten into a corner. From the door I again addressed Paddy in encouraging speech. "There's a stout-hearted boy for you! Hold hard, and mind your feet don't slip!"

He cast a quick agonized look in my direction, and, seeing that I was about basely to desert him, he gave a cry, dropped the chair, and bolted after me. As we ran down the corridor I kept well in advance, thinking it the best place in case the pursuit should be energetic. But there was no pursuit. When Paddy was holding the Countess prisoner she could only choke and stammer, and I had no doubt that she now was well mastered by exhaustion.

Curiously there was little hubbub in the inn. The fact that the Countess was the rioter had worked in a way to cause people to seek secluded and darkened nooks. However, the landlord raised his bleat at me. "Oh, sir, such a misfortune to befall my house just when so many grand ladies and gentlemen are here."

I took him quietly by the throat and beat his head against the wall, once, twice, thrice.

"And you allow mad ladies to molest your guests, do you?" said I.

"Sir," he stuttered, "could I have caused her to cease?"

"True," I said, releasing him. "But now do as I bid you and quickly. I am away to London. I have had my plenty of you and your mad ladies."

We started bravely to London, but we only went to another and quieter inn, seeking peace and the absence of fear. I may say we found it, and, in a

chair before a good fire, I again took my comfort. Paddy sat on the floor, toasting his shins. The warmth passed him into a reflective mood.

"And I know all I need of grand ladies," he muttered, staring into the fire. "I thought they were all for riding in gold coaches and smelling of beautiful flowers, and here they are mad to be chasing Irishmen in inns. I remember old Mag Cooligan fought with a whole regiment of King's troops in Bantry, and even the drums stopped beating, the soldiers were that much interested. But, sure, everybody would be knowing that Mag was no grand lady, although Pat Cooligan, her brother, was pig-killer to half the country-side. I am thinking we were knowing little about grand ladies. One of the soldiers had his head broke by a musket because the others were so ambitious to destroy the old lady, and she scratching them all. 'Twas long remembered in Bantry."

"Hold your tongue about your betters," said I sharply. "Don't be comparing this Mag Cooligan with a real Countess."

"There would be a strange similarity anyhow," said he. "But, sure, Mag never fought in inns, for the reason that they would not be letting her inside."

"Remember how little you are knowing of them, Paddy," said I. "'Tis not for you to be talking of the grand ladies when you have seen only one, and you would not be knowing another from a fish. Grand ladies are eccentric, I would have you to know. They have their ways with them which are not for omadhauns like you to understand."

"Eccentric, is it?" said he. "I thought it would be some such devilment."

"And I am knowing," said I with dignity, "of one lady so fine that if you don't stop talking that way of ladies I will break your thick scull for you, and it would matter to nobody."

"'Tis an ill subject for discussion, I am seeing that," said Paddy. "But,

faith, I could free Ireland with an army of ladies like one I've seen."

"Will you be holding your tongue?" I cried wrathfully.

Paddy began to mumble to himself—"Bedad, he was under the bed fast enough without offering her a stool by the fire and a small drop of drink, which would be no more than decent with him so fond of her. I am not knowing the ways of these people."

In despair of his long tongue I made try to change the talking.

"We are off for London, Paddy. How are you for it?"

"London, is it?" said he warily. "I was hearing there are many fine ladies there."

For the second time in his life I cuffed him soundly on the ear.

"Now," said I, "be ringing the bell. I am for buying you a bit of drink; but if you mention the gentry to me once more in that blackguard way I'll lather you into a resemblance to your grandfather's bones."

After a pleasant evening I retired to bed leaving Paddy snug asleep by the fire. I thought much of my Lady Mary, but with her mother stalking the corridors and her knowing father with his eye wide open, I knew there was no purpose in hanging about a Bath inn. I would go to London, where there were gardens, and walks in the park, and parties, and other useful customs. There I would win my love.

The following morning I started with Paddy to meet Jem Bottles, and at nightfall we came to a little inn which was ablaze with light and ringing with exuberant cries. We gave up our horses and entered. To the left was the closed door of the taproom, which now seemed to furnish all the noise. I asked the landlord to tell me the cause of the excitement.

"Sir," he answered, "I am greatly honoured to-night. Mr. O'Ruddy, the celebrated Irish swordsman, is within,



recounting a history of his marvellous exploits."

"Indeed!" said I.

"Bedad!" said Paddy.

### XX

Paddy was for opening his mouth wide immediately, but I checked him. "I would see this great man," said I to the landlord; "but I am so timid by nature I fear to meet his eagle eye. Is there no way by which we could observe him in secret at our leisure?"

"There be one way," remarked the landlord after deliberation. I had passed him a silver coin. He led us to a little parlour at the back of the tap-room. Here a door opened into the tap itself, and in this door was cut a large square window so that the good man of the inn could sometimes sit at his ease in his great chair in the snug parlour and observe that his customers had only that for which they were paying. It is a very good plan, for I have seen many a worthy man become a rogue merely because nobody was watching him. My father often was saying that if he had not been narrowly eyed all his young life, first by his mother and then by his wife, he had little doubt but what he might have been engaged in dishonest practices sooner or later.

A confident voice was doing some high talking in the tap-room. I peered through the window, but at first I saw only a collection of gaping yokels, poor, bent men with faces framed in straggly whiskers. Each had a pint pot clutched with a certain air of determination in his right hand.

Suddenly upon our line of vision strode the superb form of Jem Bottles. A short pipe was in his mouth, and he gestured splendidly with a pint pot.

"More of the beer, my dear," said he to a buxom maid. "We be all rich in Ireland. And four of them set upon me," he cried again to the yokels. "All noblemen, in fine clothes and with sword-hilts so flaming with jewels an ordinary man might have been blinded. 'Stop!' said I. 'There be more of your friends somewhere. Call them.' and with that——"

"And with that?" said I myself, opening the door and stepping in upon him. "'And with that?'" said I again. Whereupon I smote him a blow which staggered him against the wall, holding his crown with both hands while his broken beer-pot rolled on the floor. Paddy was dancing with delight at seeing some other man cuffed, but the landlord and the yokels were nearly dead of terror. But they made no sound; only the buxom girl whimpered.

"There is no cause for alarm," said I amiably. "I was only greeting an old



"I SMOTE HIM A BLOW WHICH STAGGERED HIM AGAINST THE WALL."

friend. 'Tis a way I have. And how wags the world with you, O'Ruddy?"

"I am not sure for the moment," replied Jem Bottles, ruefully. "I must bide till it stops spinning."

"Truth," cried I. "That would be a light blow to trouble the great O'Ruddy. Come, now; let us have the pots filled again, and O'Ruddy shall tell us more of his adventures. What say you, lads?"

The yokels had now recovered some of their senses, and they greeted my plan with hoarse mutterings of hasty and submissive assent.

"Begin," said I sternly to the highwayman. He stood miserably on one foot. He looked at the floor; he looked at the wall; from time to time he gave me a sheep's glance. "Begin," said I again. Paddy was wild with glee. "Begin," said I for the third time, and very harshly.

"I ——" gulped out the wretched man, but he could get no further.

"I am seeing I must help you," said I. "Come now, when did you learn the art of sticadoro proderodo sliceriscum fencing?"

Bottles rolled the eyes of despair at me, but I took him angrily by the shoulder. "Come now; when did you learn the art of sticadoro proderodo sliceriscum fencing?"

Jem Bottles staggered, but at last he choked out: "My mother taught me." Here Paddy retired from the room, doubled in a strong but soundless convulsion.

"Good," said I. "Your mother taught you. We are making progress anyhow. Your mother taught you. And now tell me this: When you slew Cormac of the Cliffs, what passado did you use? Don't be stuttering. Come now; quick with you; what passado did you use? What passado?"

With a heroism born of a conviction that in any event he was a lost man, Jem Bottles answered: "A blue one."

"Good," I cried cheerfully. "A blue

one!" We are coming on fine. He killed Cormac with a blue passado. And now I would be asking you——"

"Master," interrupted the highwayman with sudden resolution; "I will say no more. I have done. You may kill me an it pleases you."

Now I saw that enough was enough. I burst into laughter and clapped him merrily on the shoulder. "Be cheery, O'Ruddy," I cried. "Sure an Irishman like you ought to be able to look a joke in the face." He gave over his sulks directly, and I made him buy another pint each for the yokels. "'Twas dry work listening to you and your exploits, O'Ruddy," said I.

Later, I went to my chamber, attended by my followers, having ordered roast fowls and wine to be served as soon as possible. Paddy and Jem Bottles sat on stools one at each side of the fireplace, and I occupied a chair between them.

Looking at my two faithful henchmen, I was suddenly struck by the thought that they were not very brisk servants for a gentleman to take to fashionable London. I had taken Paddy out of his finery and dressed him in a suit of decent brown; but his hair was still unbarbered, and I saw that unless I had a care his appearance would greatly surprise and please London. I resolved to have him shorn at the first large town.

As for Jem Bottles, his clothes were well enough, and indeed he was passable in most ways, unless it was his habit, when hearing a sudden noise, to take a swift dark look to the right and to the left. Then, further, people might shrewdly note his way of always sitting with his back to the wall and his face to the door. However, I had no doubt of my ability to cure him of these tricks as soon as he was far enough journeyed from the scenes of his earlier activity.

But the idea I entertained at this moment was more to train them to be fine grand servants, such as I had seen



waiting on big people in Bath. They were both willing enough, but they had no style to them. I decided to begin at once and see what I could teach them.

"Paddy," said I, taking off my sword and holding it out to him, "my sword!"

Paddy looked at it.

"It is, sir," he answered respectfully.

"Bad scran to you, Paddy!" I cried angrily. "I am teaching you your duties. Take the sword—in both hands, mind you! Now march over and lay it very tenderly on the stand at the head of the bed. There now!"

I now turned my attention to Jem Bottles.

"Bottles," said I peremptorily, "my coat and waistcoat."

"Yes, sir," replied Bottles, quickly, profiting by Paddy's lesson.

"There, now," said I, as Bottles laid the coat and waistcoat on a dresser. "'Tis a good beginning. When supper comes I shall teach you other duties."

The supper came in due course, and after the inn's man had gone, I bid Jem and Paddy stand one on either side of my chair, and a little way back.

"Now," said I, "stand square on your feet, and hold your heads away high, and stick your elbows out a little, and try to look as if you don't know enough to tell fire from water. Jem Bottles has it! That's it! Bedad, look at the ignorance on him! He's the man for you, Paddy! Wake up, now, and look stupid! Am I not telling you?"

"Begor!" said Paddy, dejectedly, "I feel like the greatest omadhaun in all the west country, and if that is not being stupid enough for your honour I can do no better."

"Shame to you, Paddy, to let an Englishman beat you so easily!" said I. "Take that grin off your face, you scoundrel! Now," I added, "we are ready to begin. Wait, now. You must each have something to hold in your fist. Let me be thinking. There's only one plate, and little of anything else. Ah! I have it. A bottle! Paddy, you

shall hold one of the bottles. Put your right hand underneath it, and with your left hand hold it by the neck. But keep your elbows out. Jem, what the deuce am I to give you to hold? Ah! I have it. Another bottle! Hold it the same as Paddy. Now! Stand square on your feet, and hold your heads away high, and stick your elbows out a little, and look stupid. I am going to eat my supper."

I finished my first and second bottles, with the silence only broken by the sound of my knife-play and an occasional restless creaking of boots, as one of my men slyly shifted his position. Wishing to call for my third bottle, I turned and caught them exchanging a glance of sympathetic bewilderment. As my eye flashed upon them, they stiffened up like grenadier recruits.

But I was not for being too hard on them at first. "'Tis enough for one lesson," said I. "Put the bottles by me and take your ease."

With evident feelings of relief, they slunk back to the stools by the fire, where they sat recovering their spirits.

After my supper, I sat in the chair toasting my shins, and lazily listening to my lads finishing the fowls. They seemed much more like themselves, sitting there grinding away at the bones and puffing with joy. In the red fire-light it was such a scene of happiness that I misdoubted for a moment the wisdom of my plan to make them into fine grand numskulls.

Anyhow, I had a mind that I could be a gentleman true enough without the help of Jem and Paddy making fools of themselves. I would worry them no more.

As I was musing thus, my eyes closed from a sense of contented weariness, but I was aroused a moment later by hearing Paddy address Jem Bottles in a low voice.

"'Tis you who are the cool one, Jem," said he with admiration, "trying to make them think you were *him*!"

Here I was evidently indicated by a sideways bob of the head. "Have you not been seeing the fine ways of him? Sure, be looking at his stride and his habit of slatting people over the head, and his grand manners with his food. You are looking more like a candlestick than you are looking like him. I wonder at you."

"But I befooled them," said Bottles, proudly. "I befooled them well. It was Mr. O'Ruddy here, and Mr. O'Ruddy there, and the handsome wench she gave me many a glance of her eye, she did."

"Sorrow the day for her, then," responded Paddy; "and if you would be cozening the girls in the name of *him* there, he will be cozening you, and I never doubt it."

"'Twas only a trick to make the time go easy, it was," said Bottles, gloomily. "If you remember, Master Paddy, I have spent the most of my new service waiting under oak trees; and I will not be saying that it rained always, but oft-times it did rain most accursedly."

### XVI.

We rode on at daybreak. At the first large village I bid a little man cut Paddy's hair, and although Paddy was all for killing the little man, and the little man twice ran away, the work was eventually done, for I stood over Paddy and threatened him. Afterward the little boys were not so anxious to hoot us through the streets, calling us Africans. For it must be recalled that at this time there was great curiosity in the provinces over the Africans, because it was known that in London people of fashion often had African servants; and although London cared nothing for the provinces, and the provinces cared nothing for London, still the rumour of the strange man interested the country clodhopper so greatly that he called Paddy an African on principle, in order that he might boast to his neighbours that he had seen the fascinating biped.

There was no general understanding that the African was a man of black skin; it was only understood that he was a great marvel. Hence the urchins in these far-away villages often ran at the heels of Paddy's horse, yelling.

In time the traffic on the highway became greatly thickened, and several times we thought we were entering London because of the large size and splendour of the towns to which we came. Paddy began to fear the people had been deceiving us as to the road, and that we had missed London entirely. But finally we came to a river with hundreds of boats upon it, and there was a magnificent bridge, and on the other bank there was a roaring city, and through the fog the rain came down thick as the tears of the angels. "That's London," said I.

We rode out upon the bridge, all much interested, but somewhat fearful, for the noise of the city was terrible. But if it was terrible as we approached it, I hesitate to say what it was to us when we were once fairly in it. "Keep close to me," I yelled to Paddy and Jem, and they were not unwilling. And so we rode into this pandemonium, not having the least idea where we were going.

As we progressed I soon saw what occasioned the major part of the noise. Many heavy carts thundered slowly through the narrow, echoing streets, bumping their way uproariously over a miserable pavement. Added to this, of course, were the shrill or hoarse shouts of the street vendors and the apprentices at the shop-doors.

The eaves of the houses streamed with so much water that the sidewalks were practically untenable, although here and there a hardy wayfarer strode on in a drenched cloak, probably being too proud to take to the street.

When I wish for information I always prefer making the request to a gentleman. To have speech of a boor is well enough if he would not first study you



over to find, if he can, why you want the information, and, after a prolonged pause, tell you wrong entirely. I perceived a young gentleman standing in under a porch and ogling a window on the opposite side of the way. "Sir," said I, halting my horse close to him, "would you be so kind as to point to a stranger the way to a good inn?" He looked me full in the face, spat meaningly in the gutter, and, turning on his heel, walked away. And I will give oath he was not more than sixteen years old.

I sat stiff in the saddle; I felt my face going hot and cold. This newfeathered bird with a toy sword! But to save me, as it happened, from a preposterous quarrel with this infant, another man came along the sidewalk. He was an older man, with a grave mouth and a clean-cut jowl. I resolved to hail him. "And now, my man," said I under my breath, "if you are as bad as the other, by the mass, I'll have a turnover here with you, London or no London."

Then I addressed him. "Sir——" I began. But here a cart roared on my other side, and I sat with my mouth open, looking at him. He smiled a

little, but waited courteously for the hideous din to cease. "Sir," I was enabled to say at last, "would you be so kind as to point to a stranger the way to a good inn?" He scanned me quietly, in order, no doubt, to gain an idea what kind of inn would suit my condition.

"Sir," he answered, coming into the gutter and pointing, "'tis this way to Bishopsgate Street, and there you will see the sign of the 'Pig and Turnip,' where there is most pleasurable accommodation for man and beast, and an agreeable host."



"WOULD YOU BE SO KIND AS TO POINT TO A STRANGER THE WAY TO A GOOD INN."

He was a shop-keeper of the City of London, of the calm, steady breed that has made successive kings either love them or fearfully hate them—the bone and the sinew of the great town.

I thanked him heartily, and we went on to the “Pig and Turnip.” As we clattered into the inn yard it was full of people mounting and dismounting, but there seemed a thousand stable-boys. A dozen flung themselves at my horse’s head. They quite lifted me out of the saddle in their great care that I should be put to no trouble. At the door of the inn a smirking landlord met me, bowing his head on the floor at every backward pace, and humbly beseeching me to tell how he could best serve me. I told him, and at once there was a most pretentious hubbub. Six or eight servants began to run hither and yon. I was delighted with my reception, but several days later I discovered they had mistaken me for a nobleman of Italy or France, and I was expected to pay extravagantly for graceful empty attentions rather than for sound food and warm beds.

This inn was so grand that I saw it would no longer do for Paddy and Jem to be sleeping in front of my fire like big dogs, so I nodded assent when the landlord asked if he should provide lodgings for my two servants. He packed them off somewhere, and I was left lonely in a great chamber. I had some fears having Paddy long out of my sight, but I assured myself that London had such terrors for him he would not dare any Irish mischief. I could trust Jem Bottles to be discreet, for he had learned discretion in a notable school.

Toward the close of the afternoon, the rain ceased, and, attiring myself for the street and going to the landlord, I desired him to tell me what interesting or amusing walk could now conveniently be taken by a gentleman who was a stranger to the sights of London. The man wagged his head in disapproval.

“’Twill be dark presently, sir,” he answered, “and I would be an ill host if I did not dissuade a perfect stranger from venturing abroad in the streets of London of a night-time.”

“And is it as bad as that?” I cried, surprised.

“For strangers, yes,” said he. “For they be for ever wandering, and will not keep to the three or four streets which be as safe as the King’s palace. But if you wish, sir, I will provide one man with a lantern and staff to go before you, and another man with lantern and staff to follow. Then, with two more stout lads and your own servants, I would venture——”

“No, no!” I cried, “I will not head an army on a night march when I intended merely an evening stroll. But how, pray you, am I to be entertained otherwise than by going forth?”

The innkeeper smiled with something like pity.

“Sir, every night there meets here such a company of gay gentlemen, wits and poets, as would dazzle the world did it but hear one half of what they say over their pipes and their punch. I serve the distinguished company myself, for I dare trust nobody’s care in a matter so important to my house; and I assure you, sir, I have at times been so doubled with mirth there was no life in me. Why, sir, Mr. Fullbil himself comes here at times!”

“Does he, indeed?” I cried, although I never had heard of the illustrious man.

“Indeed and he does, sir,” answered the innkeeper, pleased at my quick appreciation of this matter. “And then there is goings on, I warrant me. Mr. Bobbs and the other gentlemen will be in spirits.”

“I never doubt you,” said I. “But is it possible for a private gentleman of no wit to gain admittance to this distinguished company?”

“Doth require a little managing, sir,” said he, full of meaning.

“Pray you manage it then,” said I,



"for I have nought to do in London for at least two days, and I would be seeing these famous men with whose names my country rings."

Early in the evening the innkeeper came to me, much pleased. "Sir, the gentlemen bid me bring you their compliments, and I am to say they would be happy to have a pleasure in the honour of your presence. Mr. Fullbil himself is in the chair to-night. You are very fortunate, sir."

"I am," said I. "Lead away, and let us hope to find the great Fullbil in high feather."

## XVII.

The innkeeper led me down to a large room, the door of which he had flung open with a flourish. "The furrin' gentleman, may it please you, sirs," he announced, and then retired.

The room was so full of smoke that at first I could see little, but soon enough I made out a long table bordered with smoking and drinking gentlemen. A hoarse voice, away at the head of the board, was growling some words which convulsed most of the gentlemen with laughter. Many candles burned dimly in the haze.

I stood for a moment, doubtful as to procedure, but a gentleman near the foot of the table suddenly arose and came toward me with great frankness and good nature. "Sir," he whispered, so that he would not interrupt the growls at the farther end of the room, "it would give me pleasure if you would accept a chair near me."

I could see that this good gentleman was moved solely by a desire to be kind to a stranger, and I, in another whisper, gave my thanks and assent to his plan. He placed me in a chair next his own. The voice was still growling from the head of the table.

Very quickly my eyes became accustomed to the smoke, especially after I was handed a filled clay pipe by my new and excellent friend. I began to

study the room and the people in it. The room was panelled in new oak, and the chairs and table were all of new oak, well carved. It was the handsomest room I had ever been in.

Afterward I looked toward the growl. I saw a little old man in a chair much too big for him, and in a wig much too big for him. His head was bent forward until his sharp chin touched his breast, and out from under his darkling brows a pair of little eyes flashed angrily and arrogantly. All faces were turned toward him, and all ears were open to his growls. He was the king; it was Fullbil.

His speech was all addressed to one man, and I looked at the latter. He was a young man with a face both Roman and feminine; with that type of profile which is possessed by most of the popular actors in the reign of his Majesty of to-day. He had luxuriant hair, and, stung by the taunts of Fullbil, he constantly brushed it nervously from his brow, while his sensitive mouth quivered with held-in retorts. He was Bobbs, the great dramatist.

And as Fullbil growled, it was a curiously mixed crowd which applauded and laughed. There were handsome lordlings from the very top of London cheek by cheek with sober men who seemed to have some intellectual occupation in life. The lordlings did the greater part of the sniggering. In the meantime, everybody smoked hard, and drank punch harder. During occasional short pauses in Fullbil's remarks, gentlemen passed ecstatic comments one to another. "Ah! this is indeed a mental feast!" "Did ye ever hear him talk more wittily?" "Not I, faith; he surpasses even himself!" "Is it not a blessing to sit at table with such a master of learning and wit?" "Ah! these are the times to live in!"

I thought it was now opportune to say something of the same kind to my amiable friend, and so I did it.

"The old image seems to be saying a

prayer," I remarked. "Why doesn't he sing it?"

My new friend looked at me, all agape, like a fish just over the side of the boat. "'Tis Fullbil, the great literary master——" he began; but at this moment Fullbil, having recovered from a slight fit of coughing, resumed his growls, and my friend subsided again into a worshipping listener.

For my part, I could not follow completely the words of the great literary master, but I construed that he had pounced upon the drama of the time, and was tearing its ears and eyes off.

At that time I knew little of the drama, having never read or seen a play in my life; but I was all for the drama on account of poor Bobbs, who kept chewing his lip and making nervous movements until Fullbil finished—a thing which I thought was not likely to happen before an early hour of the morning. But finish he did, and immediately Bobbs, much impassioned, brought his tankard heavily down on the table in a demand for silence. I thought he would get little hearing, but, much to my surprise, I heard again the ecstatic murmur: "Ah! now we shall hear Bobbs reply to Fullbil!" "Are we not fortunate?" "Faith, this will be over half London to-morrow!"

Bobbs waited until this murmur had passed away. Then he began, nailing an impressive forefinger to the table:—

"Sir, you have been contending at some length that the puzzling situations which form the basis of our dramas of the day could not possibly occur in real life, because five minutes of intelligent explanation between the persons concerned would destroy the silly mystery before anything at all could happen. Your originality, sir, is famous—need I say it?—and when I hear you champion this opinion in all its majesty of venerable age and general acceptance, I feel stunned by the colossal imbecile strength of the whole proposition. Why, sir, you may recall

all the mysterious murders which occurred in England since England had a name. The truth of them remains in unfathomable shadow; but, sir, any one of them could be cleared up in five minutes' intelligent explanation. But—mark ye!—but who has ever heard five minutes of intelligent explanation? The complex, interwoven mesh of life constantly, eternally, prevents people from giving intelligent explanations. You sit in the theatre, and you say to yourself: 'Well, I could mount the stage, and in a short talk to these people I could anticipate a further continuation of the drama.' Yes, you could; but you are an outsider. You have no relations with these characters. There is not a situation in life which does not need five minutes' intelligent explanation; but it does not get it."

It could now be seen that the old man Fullbil was simply aflame with a destructive reply, and even Bobbs paused under the spell of this anticipation of a gigantic answering. The literary master began very deliberately.

"My good friend Bobbs," said he, "I see your nose gradually is turning red."

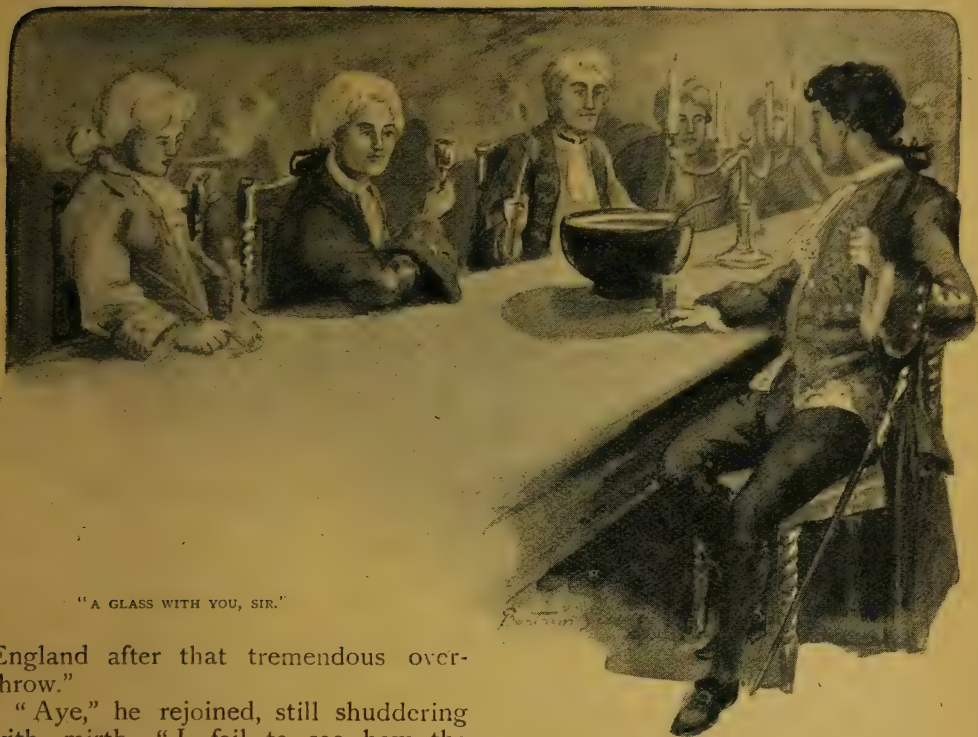
The drama immediately pitched into oblivion. The room thundered with a great shout of laughter that went to the ceiling. I could see Bobbs making angry shouts against an invulnerable bank of uncontrolled merriment. And amid his victory old Fullbil sat with a vain smile on his cracked lips.

My excellent and adjacent friend turned to me in a burst of enthusiasm.

"And did you ever hear a thing so well turned? Ha! ha! 'My good friend Bobbs,' quoth he, 'I see your nose gradually is turning red.' Ha! ha! ha! By my King, I have seldom heard a wittier answer."

"Bedad!" said I, somewhat bewildered, but resolved to appreciate the noted master of wit, "it stamped the drama down into the ground. Sure, never another play will be delivered in





"A GLASS WITH YOU, SIR."

England after that tremendous overthrow."

"Aye," he rejoined, still shuddering with mirth, "I fail to see how the dramatists can survive it. It was like the wit of a new Shakespeare. It subsided Bobbs to nothing. I would not be surprised at all if Bobbs now entirely quit the writing of plays, since Fullbil's words so closely hit his condition in the dramatic world. A dangerous dog is this Fullbil."

"It reminds me of a story my father used to tell——" I began.

"Sir," cried my new friend hastily, "I beg of you! May I, indeed, insist? Here we talk only of the very deepest matters."

"Very good, sir," I replied amiably. "I will appear better, no doubt, as a listener; but if my father was alive——"

"Sir," beseeched my friend, "the great Fancher, the immortal critic, is about to speak."

"Let him," said I, still amiable.

A portly gentleman of middle age now addressed Bobbs amid a general and respectful silence.

"Sir," he remarked, "your words concerning the great age of what I shall call the five-minutes-intelligent-explanation theory, which was first developed by the Chinese, and is contemporaneous, I believe, with their adoption of the custom of roasting their meat instead of eating it raw——"

"Sir, I am interested and instructed," rejoined Bobbs.

Here old Fullbil let go two or three growls of scornful disapproval.

"Fancher," said he, "my delight in your company is sometimes dimmed by my appreciation of your facilities for being entirely wrong. The great theory of which you speak so confidently, sir, was born no earlier than seven o'clock on the morning of this day. I was in my bed, sir; the maid had come in with my tea and toast. 'Stop,' said I, sternly. She stopped. And in those few moments of undisturbed reflection, sir, the thought came to life, the thought

which you so falsely attribute to the Chinese, a savage tribe whose sole distinction is its ability to fly kites."

After the murmurs of glee had died away, Fancher answered with spirit:—

"Sir, that you are subject to periods of reflection I will not deny, I cannot deny. Nor can I say honourably that I give my support to our dramatic friend's defence of his idea. But, sir, when you refer to the Chinese in terms which I cannot but regard as insulting, I am prepared, sir, to——"

There were loud cries of "Order! Order! Order!" The wrathful Fancher was pulled down into his chair by soothful friends and neighbours, to whom he gesticulated and cried out during the uproar.

I looked toward old Fullbil, expecting to see him disturbed, or annoyed, or angry. On the contrary, he seemed pleased, as a little boy who had somehow created a row.

"The excellent Fancher," said he, "the excellent Fancher is wroth. Let us proceed, gentlemen, to more friendly topics. You, now, Doctor Chord, with what new thing in chemics are you ready to astound us?"

The speech was addressed to a little man near me, who instantly blushed crimson, mopping his brow in much agitation, and looked at the table, unable for the moment to raise his eyes or speak a word.

"One of the greatest scientists of the time," said my friend in my ear.

"Sir," faltered the little man in his bashfulness, "that part of the discourse which related to the flying of kites has interested me greatly, and I am ready to contend that kites fly, not, as many say, through the influence of a demon or spirit which inhabits the materials, but through the pressure of the wind itself."

Fancher, now himself again, said:—

"I wish to ask the learned doctor whether he refers to Chinese kites?"

The little man hurriedly replied that he had not Chinese kites in his mind at all.

"Very good, then," said the great critic. "Very good."

"But, sir," said Fullbil to little Chord, "how is it that kites may fly without the aid of demons or spirits, if they are made by man? For it is known, sir, that man may not move in the air without the aid of some devilish agency, and it is also known that he may not send aloft things formed of the gross materials of the earth. How, then, can these kites fly virtuously?"

There was a general murmur of approbation of Fullbil's speech, and the little doctor cast down his eyes and blushed again, speechless.

It was a triumph for Fullbil, and he received the congratulations of his friends with his faint vain smile implying that it was really nothing, you know, and that he could have done it much better if he had thought that anybody was likely to heed it.

The little Doctor Chord was so down-trodden that for the remainder of the evening he hardly dared to raise his eyes from the table, but I was glad to see him apply himself industriously to the punch.

To my great alarm Fullbil now said: "Sirs, I fear we have suffered ourselves to forget we have with us to-night a strange gentleman from foreign parts. Your good fortune, sir," he added, bowing to me over his glass. I bowed likewise, but I saw his little piggish eyes looking wickedly at me. There went a titter around the board, and I understood from it that I was the next victim of the celebrated Fullbil.

"Sir," said he, "may I ask from what part of Italy do you come?"

"I come from Ireland, sir," I answered decently.

He frowned. "Ireland is not in Italy, sir," said he. "Are you so good as to trifle with me, sir?"

"I am not, sir," said I.

All the gentlemen murmured; some looked at me with pity, some with contempt. I began to be frightened



until I remembered that if I once drew my sword I could chase the whole roomful of philosophers into the next parish. I resolved to put on a bold front.

"Probably, sir," observed Fullbil, "the people of Ireland have heard so much of me that I may expect many visits from Irish gentlemen who wish to hear what my poor mind may develop in regard to the only true philosophy of life?"

"Not in the least, sir," I rejoined. "Over there they don't know you are alive, and they are not caring."

Consternation fell upon that assembly like snow from a roof. The gentlemen stared at me. Old Fullbil turned purple at first, but his grandeur could not be made to suffer long or seriously from my impudence. Presently he smiled at me—a smile confident, cruel, deadly.

"Ireland is a great country, sir," he observed.

"'Tis not so great as many people's ignorance of it," I replied bluntly, for I was being stirred somewhat.

"Indeed!" cried Fullbil. Then he triumphantly added: "Then, sir, we are proud to have among us one so manifestly capable of giving us instruction."

There was a loud shout of laughter at this sally, and I was very uncomfortable down to my toes; but I resolved to hold a brave face, and pretended that I was not minding their sneers. However, it was plain enough that old Fullbil had made me the butt of the evening.

"Sir," said the dramatist Bobbs, looking at me, "I understand that in Ireland pigs sit at table with even the best families."

"Sir," said old Fullbil, "I understand that in Ireland people go naked when it rains, for fear of wetting their clothes."

Amid the uproarious merriment provoked by their speeches I sat in silence. Suddenly the embarrassed little scientist, Doctor Chord, looked up at me with a

fine friendly sympathy. "A glass with you, sir," he said, and as we nodded our heads solemnly over the rims I felt that there had come to my help one poor little frightened friend. As for my first acquaintance, he, seeing me attacked not only by the redoubtable Fullbil, but also by the formidable Bobbs, had immediately begun to pretend that never in his life had he spoken to me.

Having a great knowledge of Irish character, I could see that trouble was brewing for somebody; but I resolved to be very backward, for I hesitated to create a genuine disturbance in these philosophical circles. However, I was saved this annoyance in a strange manner. The door opened, and a newcomer came in, bowing right and left to his acquaintances, and finally taking a seat near Fullbil. I recognised him instantly. He was Sir Edmund Flixton, the gentleman who had had some thought of fighting me in Bath, but who had refrained from it upon hearing that I had worsted Forister.

However, he did not perceive me at that time. He chattered with Fullbil, telling him evidently some very exciting news, for I heard the old man ejaculate: "By my soul! Can it be possible?" Later Fullbil related some amusing things to Flixton, and, upon an inquiry from Flixton, I was pointed out to him. I saw Flixton's face change; he spoke hastily to old Fullbil, who turned pale as death. Swiftly some bit of information flashed around the board, and I saw men's eyes open wide and white as they looked at me.

I have said it was the age of bullies. It was the age when men of physical prowess walked down the street shouldering lesser men into the gutter, and the lesser men had never a word to say for themselves. It was the age when, if you expressed opinions contrary to those of a bully, he was confidently expected to kill you or somehow maltreat you.

Of all that company of genius, there now seemed to be only one gentleman who was not a-tremble. It was the little scientist Doctor Chord. He looked at me with a bright and twinkling eye; suddenly he grinned broadly. I could not but burst into laughter when I noted the appetite with which he enjoyed the confusion and alarm of his friends.

"Come, Fullbil! Come, Bobbs! Come, Fancher! Where are all your pretty wits?" he cried; for this timid little man's impudence increased mightily amid all this helpless distress. "Here's the dignity and power of learning of you, in God's truth. Here's knowledge enthroned, fearless, great! Have ye all lost your tongues?"

And he was for going on to worry them, but that I called out to him:—

"Sir," said I mildly, "if it please you, I would not have the gentlemen disturbed over any little misunderstanding of a pleasant evening. As regards quarrelling, I am all milk and water myself. It reminds me of an occasion in Ireland

once when——" Here I recounted a story which Father Donovan always began on after more than three bottles, and to my knowledge he had never succeeded in finishing it. But this time I finished it. "And," said I, "the fellow was sitting there drinking with them, and they had had good fun with him, when of a sudden he up and spoke. Says he: 'Tis God's truth I never expected in all my life to be an evening in the company of such a lot of scurvy rat-eaters,' he says to them. 'And,' says he, 'I have only one word for that squawking old masquerading peacock that sits at the head of the table,' says he. 'What little he has of learning I could put in my eye without going blind,' says he. 'The old curmudgeon!' says he. And with that he arose and left the room, afterward becoming the King of Galway and living to a great age."

This amusing tale created a sickly burst of applause, in the midst of which I bowed myself from the room.

*(To be continued.)*

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## TO WIN SOME WINSOME LASS

To winsome lasses I have oft  
Indicted lyrics fraught with praise  
Of laughing eyes and luring ways,  
And silken tresses fine and soft,  
But ah! how loud my Julia scoffed  
And laughed to scorn my lilting lays  
To winsome lasses.  
And I have found that poets' lays—  
A good-sized cheque-book far outclasses.  
And bonds are poems naught surpasses  
And bards must make a good-sized "raise"  
To win some lasses!



## THE DIVERSIONS OF A PRINCESS

By A. CONSTANCE SMEDLEY

### VI.—REGINALD'S PEOPLE

"**H**E is *such* a man for home," said Anne.

"Still, it would be as well to make perfectly sure of your feelings," said Wisdom.

"Well, of course, I'm in love," said Anne, slightly impatiently; "that's understood."

"You have been equally certain before," said Wisdom.

"I shall never be certain of anything if I let you keep on analysing," said Anne. "Leave me alone to my feelings. I—love—Reginald! Let it stay right there!"

"By all means if it will, but will it?" persisted Wisdom, who had no scruples about intruding where it was not wanted.

"This love is a sensible domestic love," said Anne, firmly; "*quite* different from the others."

"Prove that," said Wisdom. "See if it will stand the test of my inquiries."

"Oh, you are an old nuisance!" said Anne, really a little exasperated. "Whenever I'm dashing along, and just got into my stride, so to speak, you always pull me up. I can never do a thing I want."

"But you don't want to marry just yet," said Wisdom; "surely not!"

"I suppose I shall have to, some day," said Anne. "I don't say that there's anything particularly attractive about settling down at this particular moment. The point is, I consider Reginald a peculiarly good thing in the way of husbands, and I think I ought to take advantage of the opportunity, which may not occur again. Men like Reginald are few and far between."

"In the circles in which you move," said Wisdom; "in the provinces, or suburbs, home-birds are plentiful enough."

"It is the most valuable, beautiful, and attractive sort of bird, the home-bird," said Anne, in a saintly voice. "Only through marriage can we learn the meaning of the word 'home.' We are simply lonely birds of passage till we have made a nest."

"It's close quarters in a nest," said Wisdom, "not that I would say anything against having a nest—to yourself. Rest is pleasant after continual migrations; but constant companionship with any one person is apt to be a little nerve-destroying, isn't it?"

"With most people, yes," said Anne, triumphantly. "But Reginald is so different. He is rest incarnate. He will never want to rush about, shooting, and hunting, and playing cards, and giving dinners, and yachting, and——"

"No, he'll always be there," said Wisdom, thoughtfully, dropping on to the black side of the picture with fiendish ingenuity as usual.

"But I needn't be," said Anne. "And I'm sure I shall like to think of Reginald sitting quiet and happy at home while I am frolicing around. It gives one such a nice safe feeling to know one has a husband in a little nest, just there and ready for you when you're tired of frivolling and flirting."

"You think Reginald will stay quiet while you flirt about?" said Wisdom, with alarmingly wide-opened eyes. "My dear Anne, no man feels more strongly than Reginald that a wife's place is at her husband's side. That Reginald

does not consider your place at his feet is a most striking tribute to your charms and talent."

"He is the most appreciative person I ever knew!" said Anne, waving the principal point that Wisdom raised with delicate tact. "Whatever I do, he will think perfectly wonderful, and be so proud! When things go wrong outside, and the world is critical and harsh, what a refuge Reginald's appreciative love would be!"

"You will find Reginald's love is of the proprietary order," said Wisdom. "When you are once his legally, the door of his home will be firmly shut on the outside world. You may look at it through Reginald's windows—you may even venture out a few steps, closely guarded by Reginald; but you will be in Reginald's keeping all the time, and he will let you be conscious of the fact."

"Well, that will be a very nice, secure feeling, to be guarded," said Anne, who seemed to have quite set her heart on marrying Reginald. "If Reginald worships his Penates Lares, I think the position of household goddess will be a very enjoyable one, for Reginald's devotion is not of an ephemeral nature; once given, it is given for ever. It is built up on the foundations of his character; it is a part of his whole being."

"How do you know that?" said Wisdom.

"I have seen Reginald in his home," said Anne. "I have stayed with his people. That is the only adequate test of a contemplated husband—you must see him at home. Well, Reginald is absolutely devoted to his people. He thinks them perfect."

"*Because* they are his people!" said Wisdom.

"Possibly," said Anne. "Still, that shows all the better feeling on Reginald's part. If he can admire and love such commonplace beings because they belong to him, what will his sensations be to me! You see, I shall be 'his people'

also, if I marry him," concluded Anne, very triumphant indeed.

"And will have to join in the mutual pæans, of course!" said Wisdom. "Think his people perfect too."

"I am not marrying Reginald's people!" said Anne, with a slightly jibbing movement.

"You can't separate Reginald from them," said Wisdom. "His devotion is not of an ephemeral nature. Once given, it is given for ever. It is built up on the very foundations of his character, and is part of his whole being."

"I cannot throw away my critical faculties just to please Reginald!" said Anne, rather heatedly. "No one but a pig-headed idiot would expect me to!"

"Reginald will," said Wisdom. "You know he will."

"Well, then, he'll have to be disappointed," said Anne. "His people are all very well as acquaintances, but I couldn't accept those sisters of his as intimate friends."

"You'll have to accept them as sisters," said Wisdom.

"Good gracious! we haven't an idea in common! They bore me to death!" said Anne. "I think interesting thoughts, and they think roly-poly-pudding thoughts. I study men and have experiences, and they embroider shirts for Reginald."

"They'll expect *you* to embroider his shirts, by the bye!" said Wisdom.

"I am not going to fuss over Reginald in the absurd way that his sisters do," said Anne. "I've something better to do with my time."

"What *would* his sisters think if they heard that?" said Wisdom.

"I really don't care," said Anne. "Reginald's sisters could no more understand me than they could understand—G. K. Chesterton! *We* do not penetrate brains like theirs. We skim round them so dazzlingly, that they can only open their mouths and blink their eyes, and feel vaguely that we're shocking!"

"Which is a pity," said Wisdom. "As



from the day you marry Reginald, his sisters will constitute themselves counsel for the prosecution of Reginald's happiness. So if you cannot make your defence penetrate their understanding——"

"Defence!" said Anne. "Does anyone think I would allow Reginald's sisters to criticise my actions!"

"They will," said Wisdom, audibly. "Though Reginald may place you on a little private pedestal, you don't imagine his family will forsake the family altar for a little idol like you! On the contrary, they will consider that you have been elevated to the post of chief priestess to *their* idol, and will be furiously jealous in consequence, and not in the least prepared to overlook any neglect of duty! Their eyes will be ever on you, Anne; and they will compare your ministrations with their patient and unselfish service of the past."

"They can do whatever they like," said Anne. "I don't care a continental."

"But Reginald will," said Wisdom. "He attaches the greatest value to the opinions of his people, and if they are continually proving to him how remiss you are——"

"I should hope I can hold my own against Reginald's people!" said Anne, quailing somewhat, all the same.

"*Against?*" said Wisdom. "You acknowledge the certainty of conflict then! How charming a life of endless family quarrels will be! What is it you

are marrying Reginald for? Rest, isn't it?"

"Really," said Anne "you leave no way out of anything. If I find a man who is a brute at home, the inference is plain, he will illtreat his wife; and if I find someone who is good to his people, you point out, he will continue being good to them, so that again the wife must suffer. I think the only possible way of finding anything that will meet your requirements, will be to advertise for someone of foundling extraction, who has never had a home nor people!"

"You would only exchange knowledge for uncertainty," said Wisdom. "It would simply mean that you had no data to go on; and that would be the maddest act of all."

"Oh, well," said Anne. "The point is, whether I shall be rash enough to take on Reginald's people, now."

"Suppose you accepted Mrs. Majoribank's invitation to the Riviera," said Wisdom. "Absence makes the mind grow wiser. Go away for six weeks or so, and see how you feel!"

"And I could write to Reginald's sisters, from Monte Carlo, and tell them all that I'm doing, and how much I'm dropping at the tables," said Anne, with distinctly dancing eyes. "That would be a capital test!"

"Try it," said Wisdom.

"I will," said Anne.

Anne did not marry Reginald.

## THE IDLERS' CLUB

By ROBERT BARR

When I was approaching the IDLER office one morning towards the middle of January, I noticed a tall, furtive-looking man, with a slouch hat and a seedy top coat, gazing up at the windows belonging to this magazine. I thought at first it was some humble admirer of the periodical in which these solemn words appear, but as I approached the individual I fancied I recognised him, although it is many years since we met.

"Good morning, Mr. Lang," said I, in that cheery genial voice with which I accost my acquaintances.

Instead of replying in kind the man gave a guilty start, after the manner of the villain in *Family Herald* fiction, which is published four or five doors further along the street. He instantly turned up the coat collar about his ears, and pulled his slouch hat down over his lowering brow, thus completely disguising himself, after the fashion of the *Strand Magazine* detective stories, published right round the corner in Southampton Street, and thus I was terribly bewildered, not knowing whether he belonged to the *Family Herald* staff, or was one of Sir George Newnes' employees. He then disappeared rapidly towards the east, through Covent Garden Market, dodging here and there behind barrows, and flinging looks of terror to the rear from under that forbidding slouch hat as if he feared pursuit, as Martin Hewett's men do in the *Windsor Magazine*. Then it occurred to me that the man was perhaps not a criminal, but that Lord Alfred Harmsworth had probably hidden a thousand pounds on my window-sill, and this person was trying to find

it. Anyhow, he disappeared in the direction of the *Daily Mail* office, and that of itself seems to me a most important clue.

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When I entered the *Investigation* building I asked the lift man if a tall person with a superior manner and a Scotch accent, carrying a bundle of manuscript and giving the name of Andrew Lang, had called to see me. The lift man replied that no such visitor had gone up in his elevating machine, but that a suspicious looking character had been haunting the outside of the premises these several days past. Of course, if I had been wise I should have given notice to the police at once, but I always dislike the adoption of harsh measures while in a state of uncertainty, and at that time I had no actual proof to go upon. The magistrate was more than likely to say that Mr. Andrew Lang had the same right to Henrietta Street that I had, and although I might perhaps have been able to prove that this was an exaggerated view of the case, it is not likely I should have succeeded in changing the stubborn mind of the man on the Bench. However, although Henrietta is the shortest of streets—two hundred steps takes you from end to end of it—I knew it was a Lang lane that has no turning, and so I expected time would ultimately bring evidence which might confound the loiterer if his intentions were what I feared them to be. On the twenty-fifth of the month the February IDLER was issued, rendered for ever notable by the fact that the Club contained a dissertation, written by myself on the evil effects



of slang, yet showing how it is often language in embryo as it were, giving examples of slang, and quoting a slang writer's opinion of *Punch*. I have no doubt this contribution of mine was cabled all over the world, and have reason to believe it attracted the attention of scholars everywhere. Judge then my amazement, not to say horror, on opening the *Morning Post* of five days later, in other words, of January 30th, to see on its most prominent page an article entitled "Studies in Slang," written by Andrew Lang, in which he condemned it as I had done, yet spoke of it as language in the making, and gave also a slang writer's opinion of *Punch*, with numerous examples of slang, which he expressed his inability to understand, just as I myself had done five days before. No wonder the guilty man had not returned my greeting. I saw I had been mistaken in thinking he made for the *Daily Mail* office; he most likely fled towards the office of the *Morning Post*, which is in the same direction from Henrietta Street.

At once I understood *Certainty*. the true inwardness of the situation, because years before the Idlers' Club was started, Andrew Lang had been trying to imitate it in a little magazine that is published surreptitiously by a well-known book-house in this metropolis. I quite appreciate the chagrin of Mr. Lang on being at last convinced that it was hopeless on his part to attempt to compete with me in the writing of solid, informative articles of enduring worth, but the reason of that is plain. I am an educated man, whereas Mr. Lang squandered the days of his youth in St. Andrews University and Balliol College. I cannot tell at this moment how he came by his copy of the IDLER, but the detectives are still at work on the case, busily adding mystery to an affair which

may for ever prove unfathomable. Perhaps he brazenly bought his copy at a bookstall; perhaps he sat on the doorstep of Chatto & Windus' establishment in St. Martin's Lane until the February number was issued; perhaps he haunted the printing works of Bemrose & Sons, in Watford, and in some manner not even to be suggested by me obtained an early proof-sheet of the Club. In any case I advise him strongly to forward to me the ill-gotten gains wrung from the *Morning Post* for his "Studies in Slang," and then for ever after I shall send to him an advance copy of the IDLER by the morning post on our day of publication.

But why, asks the *Explanation*, gentle reader (who is no doubt shocked by these revelations), why should Andrew Lang haunt that fount of wisdom, the IDLER office? Has the man no ideas of his own that he must purloin those of others? I beg to explain, most gentle reader, that I have not accused him of shoplifting. I have been merely pointing out a striking coincidence, showing how two great brains work in unison; myself here in London, and Andrew up north at the town named for himself or some former saint of his own cognomen. But I have now to reveal a weakness inherent in Mr. Lang which has never before been made public. It is a matter of common knowledge that Andrew Lang is an authority on all that pertains to the supernatural. I believe he is the author of those memory haunting lines:—

"And when the glum  
Researchers come,  
The brutes of bogies go;"

and he is well qualified to write on such subjects, for he himself is a haunted man. There are four letters of the alphabet, which if placed in a certain order, drive this unfortunate victim into a frenzy, and then his literary judgment

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goes, as did the brutes of bogies. If you ask me why this is so, I cannot explain it; better send a stamped and addressed envelope to Mr. Lang. Shakespeare prophesied his sad case when he said:—

“There is no reason to be rendered  
Why he cannot abide  
A swollen bagpipe, but perforce  
Must yield to such inevitable shame  
As to offend, himself being offended.”

The soothing strains of the bagpipes, which bring such gentle joy to ourselves, carry no comfort to Andrew Lang, and there you have it. There is no reason for these things, because reason flies at the approach of the mysterious influence. Unfortunately for me, my own name is composed of the letters which drive Andrew frantic, and although he is well aware in his calmer moments that my immortal works are composed of the skim milk of fiction overtopped by the cream of wisdom, he has always refrained from giving expression to this knowledge. Wherever the letters B-A-R-R meet his eye he draws his snickersnee and slashes about. J. M. Barrie has the combination in his name—diluted, as one might say—yet did he not escape vengeance. When “The Little Minister” was published, Andrew Lang fell upon it tooth and nail in the *Illustrated London News*, and had to be put in a straight waistcoat for a week after. When Barry Pain—there you have the fatal mixture again—issued his book “In a Canadian Canoe,” Andrew Lang smote him hip and thigh; yet Andrew Lang must know in his unpossessed moments that these two men stand in the very forefront rank of the world’s humorous writers. I have no doubt that J. M. Barrie will yet wring reluctant recognition from public and critics alike; and as for Barry Pain’s “Eliza,” I question if anything more deliciously humorous and of a humour so restrained has been written since the time of Charles Lamb. Of my own merits it does not become me to speak, and

readers of this column are well aware that I never mention myself. Nevertheless, Andrew Lang must have noticed the crowds around the station at St. Andrews awaiting the arrival of our special train, which brings the IDLER to the north. He cannot be ignorant of the fact that when the train whistle sounds every driver and putter in the vicinity of St. Andrews is dropped, and there is an instant stampede of the players to secure their copies of the IDLER. Surely he must be aware of the hilarity that overcomes St. Andrews each publication day, when the golf club tries in vain to compete with “The Idlers’ Club.” It is well-known that the Prime Minister, who arrived in St. Andrews last month on the next train following the IDLER special, was so impressed with the joyousness of the inhabitants that he thought there were free drinks somewhere, and asked innocently if a new bar had been opened, and thus was nearer the truth than he supposed. Here endeth my own “Study in (s)Lang.”

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At the end of last  
*A Climatic* summer I found myself  
*Improve-* compelled to censure the  
*ment.* clerk of the weather be-  
cause of the amount of  
rain he had poured upon us. Now that  
winter is drawing to its close I venture  
to renew my complaint. There is only  
one thing that can be said in favour of  
England’s weather, which is, that neither  
the Government nor the management  
of the South Eastern Railway can be  
blamed for it. It is such a relief to  
meet one disadvantage which is not the  
fault of one or other of the two organisa-  
tions I have named. However, there is  
no use in growling about a thing unless  
you have a remedy for it, and if you  
have an effective remedy, then there is  
still less use in growling. Having applied  
for the patent, I have no hesitation in  
disclosing the remedy. I propose that



we chalk out on the map of South Africa a portion equal in size to the British Isles, and then compel every man in Great Britain to build himself a house and place of business in South Africa, similar to those he owns at home. Thus we would have duplicates of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, down to the smallest town and village. About the middle of October each year we would all embark on the mercantile fleet of England, and, escorted by the British Navy, sail for the south. The sea voyage would do us all good, and might stand in the place of the usual holiday, besides being much cheaper than taking a house on the coast. On landing, each of us would settle down to his or her usual avocation as if nothing had happened, leaving England in the charge of a suitable caretaker and his wife. The first of April would be an excellent day for beginning our return, leaving another trustworthy caretaker and his wife in possession of Britain's duplicate beyond the Equator. We would thus be reasonably certain to experience good weather during some portion of the year.

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There is one controversy  
*Another* which I have designedly  
*Problem* kept out of, and that is  
*Solved.* the great question whether  
 Andrew Carnegie was  
 justified in proposing to erase Stratford-on-Avon from the map in order to build a branch of the Pittsburg Steel Works on its site; but I am glad to see that the discussion has resulted in many thousand farthings being collected for a hospital in that celebrated locality, and I hope the injured combatants will be successfully treated in that humane institution. But while I am speaking of Stratford-on-Avon, I may as well set for ever at rest the Bacon-Shakespeare quarrel which has been raging so long. It will be remembered that a wise man

once said Shakespeare's plays were not written by Shakespeare, but by another gentleman of the same name. This man of wisdom was nearer right than he imagined. The trouble all came about through a confusion of names. I was reading the records of Bisley, in Gloucestershire, and discovered that tradition has it Roger Bacon was born there; but uncertainty enters, because others claim that Bacon was born at Ilchester, in Somerset. Then it is recorded that James Shakespeare lived and died in Bisley, and was buried there on the 13th of March, 1570. So you see the seeds of controversy being sown by the uncertainty of Bacon's birthplace, the plant of dispute grew, and thus we have the Bacon-Shakespeare trouble. All this mix-up has resulted through a confusion of names—James Shakespeare instead of William, and Roger Bacon instead of Francis; and as James Shakespeare and Roger Bacon hail from the same little gossip town, they became mixed up with the concerns of their greater namesakes.

If Andrew Carnegie wishes to establish an iron foundry in this country, at the same time blotting out the birthplace of a celebrated man, he should obliterate Kirriemuer, where J. M. Barrie first saw the light of day (such as it was) in that gloomy locality. It can easily be proven that J. M. Barrie is a greater man than Shakespeare, because London is a much larger town at the present than it was in William's day, and Barrie has had four plays running at one time in this metropolis, a feat never achieved by William Shakespeare, although the latter had much less competition to face than the former. And, talking of names, I strongly suspect that the James Shakespeare, buried in Bisley just six years after William Shakespeare was born, was really named J. M. Shakespeare, to whose work William afterwards laid claim. When Mr. Carnegie destroys Kirriemuer he might put up a tablet on

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the walls of his machine shop which would delicately commemorate the greatest dramatic work of the twentieth century, and at the same time rescue from oblivion a poem, the author of which is unknown. It is carved on a tombstone in the graveyard belonging to the church of St. Margaret's, in Bils-thorpe, Nottinghamshire, and runs as follows :—

"Little Mary's dead and gone,  
And was a loving  
And a precious wife to Little John  
Fletcher."

In the recarving of this Mr. Carnegie might substitute the word "play" for the word "wife," and the words "J. M. Barrie" for the words "John Fletcher," in which case he will have the tribute about as complete as our faulty language will allow.



DOUGLAS SLADEN.

Whose book, "Queer Things about Japan," is enjoying such deserved popularity. The showman at the panorama said that Daniel might be distinguished from the lions by the green cotton umbrella under his arm. Bear this remark in mind while gazing at the above picture. We do not know who the other two persons are, but suspect that the sea faring man on Mr. Sladen's right is Admiral Togo of Japan, and the warrior behind the umbrella's point is Admiral Alexeieff of Russia.



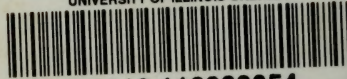








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